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THE CASE FOR AN R.V.A.

IT is impossible to over-estimate the importance of the coming talks in Washington on the problem of Western Germany. If, as Mr. Bevin recently emphasised, the oil of the Middle East is a British interest which affects the pay-packets of the workers, what happens to the coal and steel of the Ruhr affects our future as a nation. Suggestions that we should simply cut our losses in Germany and hand over to the Americans lock, stock and barrel are proposals for national suicide. To do so would be to admit that we had ceased to be even a European Power.

There is a very real danger, however, that we shall drift almost unawares into a surrender of this kind. A year ago we said we intended to nationalise German heavy industry; we now find ourselves confronted with the horrid choice between American dollars and Socialist principles. The Americans have said bluntly that they will not finance any schemes of nationalisation. But nationalisation cannot be carried through without imports of food and raw materials, which in a few months' time Britain will no longer be able to provide. If we can find no tolerable solution before then, capitulation is inevitable.

There are Americans who believe that they have only to wait a little longer for the overripe fruit to fall into their hands. There are others, like General Clay, who are impatient to "call the British bluff" and take over at once. Last Saturday he announced in Berlin his proposal to hand over twenty-six of the Ruhr industries to German directors and to postpone the issue of nationalisation. Meanwhile, German free enterprise, reinforced by American efficiency experts and fortified by food imports, could, in his view, soon get the Ruhr going again. They would, of course, work under the titular control of British and American officials, but General Clay was quite clear that the German business men must be allowed to manage their own affairs. As for the French, they should not be consulted before the decision is taken in Washington. When the British had given their concurrence, M. Ramadier would be informed of the decision.

Mr. Bevin has quite rightly informed the American Ambassador that he is utterly opposed to General Clay's plan. He has sought French support for his view that, whatever its short-run effect on production, this sort of Americanisation of the Ruhr would have fatal consequences for Europe. If there is one thing on which Europeans agree, including a great majority of the German people, it is that the German industrialists were the root of all evil. To give them back their power in the Ruhr would be to admit that the war was a mistake; and it would create throughout Western Germany a Communist movement able to rally not only the working-classes, but every German patriot as well.

Is the deadlock therefore complete? If the only alternatives are nationalisation or the Clay Plan, the answer is "Yes." In a battle fought out on this field, we should be forced to follow the advice recently offered by Mr. Gandhi to the women of India: "If you are going to be raped, you can avoid it by holding your breath until you die."

But in Germany there is another way out. For two years the French have vainly pointed out that internationalisation has much to commend it. Not unnaturally, they believe that a centralised German State, owning and controlling the Ruhr, could again be a menace to European peace; and they have pleaded for a plan designed to make the heart of German militarism the heart of a peaceful Europe.

The Marshall offer has given to the French thesis a new significance. If it is American policy to encourage the formation of an economic union of Western Europe, then the Ruhr must be integrated into it. In this matter the French stand closer to the U.S.A. than we do. America, though opposed on principle to Socialism, has at last been reconciled to the success of her own T.V.A.; and the next recession will probably bring with it an even more ambitious Missouri Valley project. If Americans choose to say that these vast public corporations, owning and controlling the means of production in the service of the community, are not Socialism, why should a European quarrel about words?

The T.V.A. principle could be applied in Western Germany; a Ruhr Valley Authority, owning and controlling the land, workshops and transport system, would be the first milestone on the way to a united Europe. The capital would be provided exclusively by European Governments and the U.S.A. at fixed rates of interest; and the management entrusted to Germans, assisted by European and American technicians. They would work to a policy laid down by a Board, composed of representatives of the Member States and also of the future Germany. As with T.V.A., all profits would be ploughed back into the concern.

The R.V.A. would, of course, control the economy of only a few square miles of Germany. But its establishment would bring new hope to Western Europe. The French concern for their own heavy industry would be largely met, since the R.V.A. would determine what proportion of its output should go to Germany and what outside. To America it would provide a sound business investment which, unlike General Clay's plan, combats Communism instead of creating it. Lastly, it would enable Mr. Bevin to keep his pledged word to institute public ownership of German heavy industry, while offering to the Americans a plan which makes sense to them in terms of their own experience at home.

But would not an R.V.A. be unacceptable to German opinion? This surely depends on the framework in which it is presented. If it were undertaken merely as a method of exploiting a defeated enemy, its failure would be certain. But an R.V.A., within a customs' union of Western Europe and proposed as part of the Marshall plan, would not be a unilateral violation of German sovereignty but the beginning of that economic federalism without which Western Europe, including Germany, cannot avoid disaster.

But time is running short. With every succeeding month our bargaining position is weaker. Now is the time to concert with the French and Benelux a practical plan of internationalisation and to convince the Americans that, in this case, good politics is good business, too.

Anglo-Russian Trade Breakdown

The failure of the Wilson Mission to conclude a commercial agreement with Russia would have serious consequences for this country, if the breakdown of the Moscow talks were regarded as final. Britain's dependence on Western Hemisphere wheat—to say nothing of our acute shortage of building timber—would be greatly and undesirably increased by our inability to secure hoped-for Russian supplies. We trust, therefore, that, despite the negative way in which Sir Stafford Cripps announced the Mission's failure to Parliament, the British Government may yet find a way of reopening the negotiations. Indeed, the differences which led to a suspension of the talks appear in the end to have been exceedingly narrow. By all accounts the negotiations between Mr. Wilson and Mr. Mikoyan were conducted, particularly towards the end, in a friendly, hard-headed, businesslike fashion. Contrary to the reports which appeared last week in the British press, the deal did not break down through Russia's demand for an excessively high price for her wheat. Sir Stafford made it clear that agreement was eventually reached on all matters within the trade field, including quantities, prices and terms and conditions of shipment. The obstacle which the British Cabinet found insuperable was Russian insistence on a modification of the 1941 Civil Supplies Agreement involving greater reductions and postponements of the interest and capital repayments due to this country than we, it was thought, could afford. The British attitude appears also to have been influenced by the fear that it might be impossible to guarantee annual deliveries of the steel and other products wanted by the Russians on a scale sufficient to balance the value of the wheat. Thus we should be involved in payment to Russia of sterling convertible into dollars. We find it hard to believe that it would not have been wiser to decide to switch British exports to the required extent; and, as for the concessions demanded from Britain in respect of the Credit Agreement, the difference seems to have been narrowed down to some £8 millions—a small sum in relation to the magnitude of the potential trade at stake. It has been suggested in some quarters that American pressure was exercised on the Cabinet against the Russian deal. As evidence in support of this view there is adduced Mr. Marshall's prompt repudiation of an announcement by the U.S. State Department that America was prepared to waive Article 9 of the Dollar Loan agreement so far as British trade with non-self-governing colonies was concerned. "That depends," Mr. Marshall implied. For our part, we are inclined to think that, if political considerations weighed at all against an agreement which would have helped us to break the Chicago market price for wheat, the Cabinet was influenced not by direct American pressure but by the reluctance on the part of at least one Minister to depart from cherished conceptions of multilateral trading in favour of a bilateral bargain, no matter how favourable to Britain.

Reaping the Whirlwind

Pursuing in Palestine a policy which lacks both principles and the saving grace of expediency, the British Government is being manœuvred into an increasingly untenable position. As was to be expected, the illegal immigrants shipped back to France have refused to land; and by barring correspondents from access to the three transports at Port de Bouc, the Foreign Office has given a free run to Zionist allegations that the transports are "hell ships" in which several Jews have been beaten to death. Meanwhile, as was also to be expected, conditions in Palestine are steadily deteriorating. As a reprisal for the execution of three terrorists on Monday, the Irgun have hanged the two British sergeants whom they had kidnapped as hostages. This can only provoke even more savage repression by the military authorities, whose anti-Semitism is already notorious, and alienate still further world opinion. The latest news is of a decree empowering the Army to blow up property if there is evidence that it has been used as a base for violence. This will be interpreted abroad as a step towards a "Lidice" policy of reprisals. We are rivalling the Irgun in the gentle art of making enemies.

The City and the Crisis

London's big financial institutions have chosen this moment to remind the Government that, though the Bank of England is nationalised, the controllers of large blocks of private capital can still exercise a considerable influence on Britain's economy. Heavy selling of Government securities, which began to gather impetus two months ago and reached a climax this week, has brought Stock Exchange gilt-edged prices down to a level at which the rate of interest is 3 per cent., as compared with 2½ per cent. at the beginning of the year. The City, of course, is well aware that a financial crisis cannot be staged on the lines of the flight of capital which brought down the MacDonald Government sixteen years ago. The 1947 situation differs from that of 1931, since there is to-day an effective control on the movement of capital out of the country. The present selling of Government securities by insurance companies and industrial companies with large reserves of invested funds represents, partly, the normal desire of managements to increase their "liquidity" at a time when the country's general economic outlook is regarded as precarious; but it also amounts to a revolt on the part of big corporate investors against Mr. Dalton's policy of ultra-cheap money. The City has for some time been talking about the need for "disinflation"—a word coined to camouflage the wish to see the working class brought to heel by a taste of unemployment—and the screwing up of interest rates would be an essential part of such a policy. Sir Clive Baillieu, ex-president of the Federation of British Industries, was certainly speaking for the City when he urged the Government last week-end to abandon all measures "cutting across national unity" and to retrench immediately in its expenditure on schools, hospitals and housing. The selling of Government securities cannot compel the Government to "disinflate"; but the process is embarrassing for Mr. Dalton, and is bound to make more onerous than need be the cost of financing the housing programme. The weakness of the Chancellor's position is that he had forced down the rate of interest to a point at which Government securities, standing at a premium, were unattractive to private investors in the surtax-paying brackets. Thus more and more stock had to be absorbed by corporate investors, who are now able to dictate the rate of interest by throwing their holdings on an unwilling market.

A Last Word to the States

In his first and last address to the Indian States as Crown Representative, Lord Mountbatten has done much to combat Indian suspicions that the British Government, or its agents in the Political Department in India, were not wholehearted in their protestations that the States should come into association with either India or Pakistan. Those suspicions had been increased by Tory speeches, during the Indian Independence Bill, which suggested that the States should be entitled to assume full independence and to maintain relations with Britain as independent countries. By preparing a draft instrument of accession to India or Pakistan for all the States, and pressing on them a committee to consider its terms, Mountbatten has forced the pace. The instrument is designed to surrender, on the States' side, control of foreign affairs, defence and communications, whilst leaving them full power over internal matters. That is obviously the best arrangement for the present for all concerned—domestic reforms can come later. There could have been no room for doubt among the Princes, by the close of Mountbatten's speech, that the British can see no other solution for them but joining up with the rest of India, and that standing out would be the way to chaos. This declaration has already had a profound effect on the rulers, not least on intransigent Hyderabad and Travancore, both of whom, it is understood, have been told privately that if they persist in their intention to divorce themselves from the rest of India, they cannot expect any direct relations with Britain.

The Future of F.A.O.

Sir John Orr's last report as Director-General of F.A.O. is a warning and a challenge. With his last year's predictions grimly confirmed by the present food situation, he foresees a severe food shortage for at least two years more unless . . . The "unless" is, of course, his insistent demand for co-operative action not only between nations but between the diverse agencies of Uno. The 1948 harvest will be parlous in many war-devastated countries unless they are provided with agricultural equipment, fertilisers, seeds, and the consumer goods which are the only "currency" likely to induce farmers to produce and surrender the necessary food. That is a question not only for F.A.O., but for the other agencies as well, and for the still pathetically inadequate Economic and Social Council. But, as Sir John points out, the paradox of the 'thirties is already appearing. The increase of agricultural production achieved by exporting countries is showing signs of creating "unmarketable surpluses." Already a surplus of wool exists and potential surpluses (surplus only in terms of dollar-deficiency) of cereals and sugar are worrying the Western producers. Unless measures are taken—and Orr relies on his World Food Council—they will again bring ruin and misery to millions of land-workers and will endanger the stability of the whole economic system. Calling on the 50 member-nations to implement the recommendations of the Preparatory Commission for a World Food Council, Orr says that failure to agree on positive action may mark the failure of the United Nations experiment because, "if nations cannot agree on a food programme affecting the welfare of people everywhere, there is little hope of them reaching agreement on anything else."

Trade Unions Ask for a Lead

The agenda for September's Trades Union Congress, issued this week, must mainly consist of resolutions drawn up at least some weeks ago. Nevertheless it gives ample evidence of disquiet among trade unionists about the lack of Government planning to deal with the economic crisis. What the unions want, clearly, is not so much new planning machinery as a plan. That is, they want some definite indication that the Government is taking measures to deal with the crisis in advance and is not merely drifting right into the middle of it, as the MacDonald Government did in 1931. The uneasiness has more than one aspect. Thus, the Electrical Trades Union calls outright for a plan for the essential industries, defining priorities and production targets for the next two years: the foundry workers want an all-in plan for industry, with planning committees at every level; and the N.U.R. calls for measures to be taken by the trade unions to ensure the success of socialised industries. The A.E.U. and other unions want production committees to be made generally compulsory; and the A.E.U. further calls for the appointment for some full-time members to the General Council to give attention to the general problem facing the trade union movement. There is, indeed, in the agenda no direct call either for a wages policy or for direction of labour; but it is made plain that the unions are looking for a lead from the Government, and are by no means satisfied with the appointment of a few planners with no powers to plan and a few spare-time advisers, drawn from the trade unions and employers' associations, who have no time to advise.

PARLIAMENT: Mal du Siècle

Wednesday

WEDNESDAY night (or Thursday morning) was rewarding in Division records but in little else. Fresh arguments and clear speeches are rarely forthcoming between four and nine in the morning. More customary are bursts of abuse with small relevance to the matters in hand. On this occasion the Tories paid considerable attention to the question of "jobs for the boys." That all posts in the gift of the Government are not now given to non-political Conservatives is a matter of deep concern to them: they see here a main cause of the present economic difficulties of the country. At any rate, since they can think of no constructive alternative policies, it is a proposition well worth putting forward to fill in debating time and to keep tired Members out of bed.

Indeed, on all subjects, the Tories are running short of ideas, and doubtless will be even happier than Government supporters when the Recess arrives. It will relieve them of the irksome necessity which binds them in the House, either to keep to the facts, which are unpalatable to them, or to look foolish; and it will release them for the happy holiday task of making their usual irresponsible, untruthful speeches up and down the country. It is obviously the function of an Opposition in the House to oppose. But, in a really serious situation, it is a tiresome duty if all the points which are made inevitably turn out to be in conflict with one another, and those that could be made have to be left unsaid because they are at variance with the principles of the Party.

Even to Tories it is evident that we could do with a well-knit, centrally controlled economic plan, but planning is anathema to them. The huge gap in the foreign trade balance must be bridged, but there must be no cuts in tourist allowances, petrol, essential foods, newsprint, or any other import. Least of all can the Armed Forces be touched; the Tories of to-day believe in large Forces and support Ernie Bevin. They can see that vigorous leadership is wanted, but they dare not press for it because their only road to power—Coalition—is blocked, and, if Labour leaders are too good, Conservatives will never have the chance to rule again. To trade extensively with Russia might help with the dollar deficit, but it might also lift the "Iron Curtain." Hence the pleasure with which the Tories greeted the news on Monday that the trade talks had, for the moment, failed. Economic catastrophe is their chief hope, and they have no wish to stop it. Yet that, too, would have its drawbacks: they might be called on to put things right, and they know it is beyond them.

Monday's debate on Housing provided an example of the Conservative dilemma. Their main plank was that controls make speed in building impossible. If private enterprise could build as it pleased, there would be many more houses and shorter waiting lists. But when Nye Bevan, in his most aggressive and effective mood, asked if that meant they were in favour of the uncontrolled erection of cinemas, skating rinks and luxury houses to sell to the rich, in place of the four-to-one ratio compelling the provision of houses to let to the poor, there was no answer. Nor was there any reply when Hudson, sneering at the difficulty of obtaining soft-wood timber, was challenged to say where he would have got it from. But perhaps that was because R. W. G. Mackay had annihilated the Tories in a brilliant debating speech at the start of the discussion, and Bevan's announcement that bonus payments are now legal prevented them from ever collecting their wits, despite the fact that this was the fourth time he had talked them into silence.

On Thursday the Tories had fared no better. They had demanded a day to talk about the Ministry of Supply, but all the use they made of their opportunity was to put up Lyttleton to ask Wilmot the facetious question: "Is your Ministry really necessary?" It was left to Hale to make the speech of the day. Delivering a curtain-raiser to Wednesday's meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party, he urged the Government to provide a plan, information, and leadership. An appeal which he delivered more slowly than usual to a House markedly responsive despite its vigil of the night before.

PHINEAS TERTIUS

POLICY NOT PANIC

AFTER ten days of Cabinet-making in the lobbies and in the press, the Prime Minister, at Wednesday's private meeting of the Parliamentary Party, quickly disposed of the silly rumours about an appeal to the country and the formation of a National Government. Whatever defects he may possess as a political leader, Mr. Attlee has an obstinate integrity of purpose and loyalty to the Movement which he serves. So long as he is Prime Minister, the Labour Government will continue to carry out its Socialist programme of legislation and to rely on its huge majority in Parliament for its support. Mr. Attlee has the right to remind Tories who complain about the Government's unpopularity that he is the only Prime Minister in British history whose Party has not lost a single by-election during his first two years of office.

But the Prime Minister had a far more important task last Wednesday than the killing of Tory rumours. During recent weeks there has been for the first time within his own Party and in the Trade Union Movement serious and outspoken criticism of his leadership. It was widely felt that the principle of departmental autonomy was threatening to override that of collective Cabinet responsibility, and that Mr. Attlee was permitting the Government to drift into an economic crisis without a policy or a collective mind. Influential voices had argued that the T.U.C. would have more confidence in a Government led by Mr. Bevin. They were silent on Wednesday.

The official statement on Wednesday's meeting showed that Mr. Attlee once again re-asserted his personal leadership and dispelled an incipient panic. We may be sure that he did so not by demagogy or evasion of the issues, but by showing that his critics' demands for action would be fulfilled. In next week's economic debate, he will have no difficulty in demonstrating that the Government's policy is in accord with the Party's and the country's wishes.

His decision not to gamble any longer on American assistance is tardy but none the less welcome. If we had waited till the dollars were exhausted this autumn, we should have been at the mercy of the U.S.A. By ruthlessly cutting imports and overseas commitments now, we can save our independence as a nation and our position as a European Power. By refusing to go on paying extortionate prices for New World foodstuffs, we shall appreciably increase the chance of a fall in American prices, and of a successful completion of the trade negotiations with Russia.

Nevertheless the "Battle of the Gap" is beginning just one year too late. Ever since the Amendment to the King's Speech last November, Socialist critics have been warning the Government against placing undue reliance on American aid and have been advocating the policies which Mr. Attlee now proposes to enforce. The *Keep Left* programme, which was resoundingly defeated at Margate, is now apparently accepted by those who only a few weeks ago were dismissing it with arguments culled from the *Economist*. There is still time, but only just time, to avoid catastrophe.

The first essential is to create the organisation for building a siege economy. The Government's planning staff is still woefully weak. It must be speedily strengthened if sudden import cuts are not to produce widespread and chaotic unemployment. Defence Regulations can, no doubt, be used to cut down unessential, and to give priority in raw materials to essential, industries. But for this to work smoothly the Government needs not only a Cabinet decision but an efficient organisation as well. To-day such an organisation does not exist.

In the second place the Government must be ready to face the consequences of an American recession, involving indirectly the drying up of many of our export markets. Here everything depends on speeding up the Paris talks and forming a Western European export-import area which can hope to maintain its own multilateral trade in a period of world depression and to develop new trade with Eastern Europe and Russia.

But the most important problem remains that of home morale. The inevitable cuts in the working-class standard of living must be balanced by an effective profits policy and by such upper-class cuts as the enforcement of the surrender of points for restaurant meals and the curtailment of foreign travel and pleasure motoring. In next week's debate the Government will be judged, not merely on its statement of policy, but by its ability to prove that its Socialist plans will be ruthlessly carried out in an economy still 80 per cent capitalist.

HOW TO MEET THE CRISIS

III.—WHY AND HOW WE MUST SAVE DOLLARS

NEARLY everyone now knows that the foreign exchange problem is the overriding issue at present facing this country. Fewer perhaps realise that the problem is not mainly due to the loss of our foreign investments during the war, but far more to the boom in American and world prices of food and raw materials. (A fall of only 15 per cent in prices of our imports would save more than twice as much per year as the whole foreign investment income lost since before the war.) And even the price boom itself, and its effect on the British balance of payments, have not been so important a cause of the change for the worse during the last five months as the suddenly developing world dollar scarcity.

The British negotiators at Washington in the autumn of 1945 originally asked for £1,250,000,000 worth of dollars. In fact, the Loan (including the £150,000,000 Lend-Lease "wind-up") totalled only about £1,100,000,000 worth. In December, 1945, the British Government estimated that there would be a £750,000,000 deficit on the balance of payments in 1946, and a further £500,000,000 in 1947 and 1948. That is to say, according to the official estimate then published, more than half the dollar credit should have been spent *in* 1946, and virtually the whole of it by the end of 1947.

In fact, recovery during 1946 much more than surpassed all official and unofficial expectations. Total exports reached £900,000,000, against an official estimate of £750,000,000. As a result, the realised deficit was only £400,000,000; and of this deficit of £400,000,000, no less than £300,000,000 was accounted for by Government expenditure abroad. Apart from such expenditure, therefore, our deficit in that year was only £100,000,000—which, allowing for the change in prices, was, if anything, rather less than the £70,000,000 of 1938. This was a remarkable achievement; and as a result, we only spent £150,000,000 worth of the U.S. credit, and a further similar amount of the Canadian credit, in 1946—much less than was expected. We actually built up our gold reserve by £100,000,000 in the second half of the year.

After this surprisingly good result, I don't think anybody can blame the Government for forecasting in the Economic Survey of February that the deficit would be only £350,000,000 during 1947, or the *Economist* for estimating in its number of April 5th that, even allowing for special drains, the two Loans together were likely to last "well into 1949." But, in fact, since then the situation has turned suddenly for the worse; and it is very important to realise why.

The change has not been mainly due to the fuel crisis, or even to the rise in American prices, though the latter has, of course, been serious. Our visible import surplus (which naturally feels the effect of the fuel crisis, and rise in prices) in the first six months was £260,000,000. But our drawings

on the U.S. and Canadian Loans totalled £400,000,000 in the same six months—a rate over twice as great as in the last six months of 1946, when the visible import surplus was not much greater. What has been the reason for this sudden change?

One reason must have, of course, been the "invisible" items—i.e., very largely, our Government expenditure abroad. This was estimated in the Survey to be £175,000,000 in 1947, or half the whole deficit; but it seems a fair guess that it has, in fact, been running much higher. Secondly—and this must have been the biggest single factor—a world-wide dollar scarcity has hit other countries with unexpected suddenness, and has compelled us to hand over our dollars for purposes other than buying goods from the United States. It is now common knowledge that in the past three months we have had to pay for Argentine and Canadian food in U.S. dollars, and that other dollars from the Loan have leaked away in payment of past debts, or other "convertibility" concessions, or by one loophole or another to countries desperately pressing for them.

We can all understand basically why dollars are scarce. It is because the production of goods and services in the United States was stimulated by the war (while throughout Europe and Asia it was dislocated), and has accordingly risen from about 25 per cent of world production before the war to about 50 per cent to-day. But why should this dollar scarcity suddenly grow so much worse in 1947 than in 1946? One answer is that the termination of Unrra, which was pumping out at least £500,000,000 worth of U.S. dollars per year, intensified the dollar famine in Europe. Our own dollar loan has, in effect, become a sort of supplementary Unrra, helping to keep Europe going. Another reason is the great increase in the U.S. export surplus this year. It is not so much that we are living "beyond our means," but that other people are living on our means and beyond theirs. This cannot go on.

If we analyse the story up to date, therefore, two main causes of our own dollar drain emerge plainly. First, we, the United Kingdom, are trying to continue our old function of policing the vital communications of the British Commonwealth, and indeed the world, in the Mediterranean, the Middle East and the Far East. Secondly, both by our original Unrra and other relief expenditures, and now by acting as a second Unrra and universal supplier of dollars, we are trying to help out all sorts of needy countries. In short, we are setting up simultaneously as a sort of world Father Christmas and unpaid policeman, when both jobs are hopelessly beyond our means.

Until the Uno security system of the future comes into being, some policing of the world's vital trade routes must be performed. At present the United States and the British Dominions expect much of this to be performed by the U.K. alone. But the Dominions—now Commonwealth—in this matter rather tend to expect all the privileges of independence without the obligations. They and the United States will really have to realise that if they do not agree in a timely and orderly way to share these security functions, the U.K. will be forced into a sudden and disorderly abandonment of them.

Obviously, the only basic solution of the economic problem over the next two years is "unrequited exports" from the United States, i.e., a huge export surplus, financed by a great outflow of dollar credits. This follows brutally and inevitably from the present ratio of U.S. to non-U.S. production; and the natural wishful attempt to ignore this fact, and to imagine that we can somehow get through the immediate future without U.S. goods, has been the origin of most of our mistakes in the last two years. The success of the Marshall Plan is an indispensable element in any complete solution.

Nevertheless, we must act ourselves to overcome the immediate danger, and not use the Marshall proposals as a pretext for further delay. Three general lines of action are open to us:—

1. *Action to prevent that part of the dollar drain which is due to calls on our dollars by third countries, and not to our purchases from the United States.* The aim should be to save in this way something like the £200,000,000 or so by which the annual dollar drain exceeds the balance of payments deficit. It is impossible for anybody without official information to guess how far this can succeed; but what we must seek to do is to freeze foreign-held sterling balances and limit "convertibility" as far as is possible and judicious, and to decline to pay U.S. dollars to other countries unless we have absolutely no alternative. Actually, to refuse convertibility to sterling area countries would, of course, be to break up the sterling area, and would probably not help in the end; but we must at least now get it into our heads, both on this issue and on "non-discrimination" that we are moving into a world, not of multi-lateral trade and free convertibility, but of deliberate planning of trade by associated countries.

2. *Action to increase over-all production and exports.* It is no good trying to avoid the necessity for import cuts by arguing that somehow or other production and exports can be raised a long way immediately above present targets. They cannot. Industrial employment in Britain at this moment, and, in my opinion, industrial output, is higher than ever before in peacetime. Exports are at an all-time record level in value (and it is value that matters). Activity in the shipbuilding, iron and steel, motor vehicle, and many other parts of the engineering industry, are at an all-time record level.

There are really only three more big steps that can be taken. One is to intensify yet again the drive to recruit more fit young men into the coal industry. This would achieve more than everything else put together on the home front. I believe, for instance, that if an offer was made to German prisoners of war to volunteer for underground coal work with civilian status, 15,000 or 20,000 strong, fit, young, willing workers would come forward from this source alone and could be trained in six months. It is deplorable that local obstruction of the intake of already trained Poles is at present preventing this further step. Secondly, we could break the textile bottleneck, if we really wished, in a few months by prohibiting the recruitment of additional labour by "unessential" firms in the wool spinning and cotton spinning towns. Negative direction on the lines of the wartime Restriction on Engagement Order is, I believe, the solution; and it can largely operate painlessly, as natural wastage reduces the labour force of the unessential firm. The key to this policy must, of course, be location.

Thirdly, I suggest we should save steel, timber and manpower by pruning capital schemes. It would be foolish to touch housing or factory building in Development Areas; but I would put an absolute ban on commercial building in areas of labour shortage. This is pure national waste at the present time.

These things should be done. But they will only enable us to achieve our new export target for 1947-48. They will not close the gap. We must therefore face, first, a further diversion of goods from the home market to export. The Government is rightly already doing this in the case of textiles; and motor cars are the obvious other example. Our precious steel should only be allocated to the motor car and other parts of the engineering industry on condition of a much higher export percentage than the present.

3. *Action to cut foreign exchange expenditure on both visible and invisible items.* Even if we assume that exports could be raised by another £50,000,000 by the above diversions, we are still faced with an annual deficit of something like £400,000,000; and it seems to me obvious that in the next year the major contribution must come from cuts. Here the present wastage of hard currency on the £75 a head foreign travel allowance is inexcusable, and should be reduced. Next most obvious of the "invisible" items is Government expenditure in Germany. This, which costs about £80,000,000 on the balance of payments (about half of which is dollars) is absolutely impossible for this country to go on bearing; and I believe we ought to inform the United States at once that we shall evacuate the British Zone at the end of the year unless the U.S. take over the whole foreign exchange costs, by the Marshall Plan or some other method. Other Government expenditure abroad amounts to not more than another £100,000,000; and halving of it would, therefore, save only £50,000,000.

We are thus still left with a deficit of over £250,000,000. It would take the entire elimination of imported films and consumer goods, and the halving of our present petrol and tobacco imports, to cut this figure even by £100,000,000. We are therefore brought to the sobering conclusions that the account cannot be nearly balanced without a cut in imports of staple foods. Assuming that industrial raw materials, and bread, fats and sugar, cannot be touched, we could only achieve a balance, if the crisis did come on us next winter, by cutting the meat ration in half. It seems well that the country should understand now that we shall have to do something like that, if the Marshall proposals do not succeed, and if there is no major fall in world prices.

The Government is, I believe, justified in refraining from a big cut in the meat ration or in imported raw materials, both of which would react sharply on exports, until the prospects for the Marshall Plan and the movement of prices becomes clearer. But it does not seem to me that they are justified in putting off the possible minor economies, just because they are minor, any longer. In that case, we ought to act now in the following ways:—

1. More general freezing of sterling balances.
2. More intelligent interpretation of "non-discrimination."
3. Big cut in foreign Government expenditure, and declaration to U.S. that we cannot spend foreign exchange on Germany beyond a fixed date.
4. Drastic cut in foreign travel allowance.
5. Cut in petrol allowance, and stricter enforcement of rationing.
6. Diversion of motor car and other output to exports by means of material allocations.
7. Use of Control of Engagement Orders to prevent recruitment by unessential firms.
8. Ban on factory building in areas of labour shortage.

Simultaneously, should not the country be told that, if these measures do not suceed, it may face a big cut in meat and possibly other foods next winter?

DOUGLAS JAY

EASTERN EUROPE AND MR. MARSHALL

(BY CABLE)

Krakow: Wednesday

CZECHOSLOVAKIA is a very middle-class country with Western standards and an old democratic system. More than eighty per cent of her trade is with the West. Poland to-day is ninety-five per cent Catholic, is traditionally anti-Russian and, like Czechoslovakia, desires to keep her trading and cultural contacts with the West. Both countries are to-day moving towards Socialism in their own ways, and their Communists agree that these ways will not be the same as that of Soviet Russia. In both countries there is much disappointment that they are cut off from possible dollar benefits from the Marshall proposals. But when Colonel Harrison, of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, says that the Poles do not need help—contrary to his report that Poland needs both seeds and machinery and in spite of the fact that Poland is deprived of all post-Unrra help—the Poles only see in this confirmation of American hostility and proof that their Govern-

ment was right not to co-operate in the Paris Conference.

It is quite untrue that Soviet bullying was necessary to keep Czechoslovakia or Poland away from Paris. Both countries are in the Soviet security and planned economy zone and, if a choice must be made, almost everyone, whether of the Right or the Left, takes it for granted that their country must remain in the Russian orbit. In one sense, their position is similar to our own. We desperately desire to be independent of American domination, but for geographical, economic and traditional reasons we know that, if we are forced to a decision, we are in the Western sphere. But, like the British, the Czechs and Poles want above all to avoid having to make such a choice.

There are many stories circulating in Prague about the Czech change of mind in reply to the invitation to Paris and many people regret the loss of face involved. The truth seems to be that the Russians were at first undecided and both the Poles and the Czechs thought they would be going. I had a long talk with Jan Masaryk, the Czech Foreign Minister, who refuted the story that he misunderstood Soviet intentions after a conversation with the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires. Masaryk is Western in outlook and policy but, like all other Czechs, he realises, without bribery or bullying, that Czechoslovakia could not break from the Slav bloc or act independently at Paris if the Russians were not going. The upshot of the Marshall proposals, as far as the Czechs are concerned, has been a most favourable trade agreement with Russia. The Czechs feel some doubt about the quality of Soviet raw materials, and their past experience suggests that Soviet supplies may be inferior to those from the West. But that their decision to conclude this pact was right is not doubted for a moment, especially since the reported failure of the British trade talks with Moscow is universally thought to confirm the view that America is determined that Britain shall not find an alternative source of cereals in the East and that the United States wishes to split Europe into two blocs. The net result has been to unify more strongly the Slav grouping.

I had two hours' talk in Warsaw with Gomulka, the Polish Vice-Premier. He is probably the most influential Polish Communist, of working-class origin, familiar with the inside of prisons and Moscow-trained. He is one of the small group of Communists and Socialists who, in spite of real differences, at present control Poland with great efficiency. This is admitted by their strongest opponents, who, in spite of press censorship, are able to express their ideological opposition in Catholic newspapers and in Parliament. Gomulka regarded the Marshall Plan as a purely political anti-Soviet move: he didn't believe it could save America from a slump, though he said he couldn't prophesy how soon that slump would come. In his view, the plan was pre-arranged between Marshall and Bevin; he was bitterly critical of a British Labour Movement which preferred American Imperialism to alignment with a Socialist Europe. America, he said, was everywhere preparing for war against Russia; but, if war did come, it would be wrong to assume that the Soviet bloc would be defeated. I asked him why, if he thought the position was so clear, the Eastern Powers did not attend the Paris Conference. In the first place, I argued, Congress would probably not vote money for the Marshall Plan if Russia and Poland opted to participate in it. Secondly, I asked, even if Congress provided the cash, by going to Paris, would not the Slav Powers be able more effectively to oppose the use of American money to rebuild Western Germany for a future war, which was the principal danger? Gomulka was extremely frank and friendly but gave no clear answer on this point.

I have formed a clear impression of the real reasons for the Slav abstentions from Paris. The Russians doubtless fear that if the Eastern states were involved in the discussions, their exclusive loyalty to Russia might be undermined by dollars. But there is a further, more important, motive. In Eastern Europe it is thought that everything has been arranged by Britain and America, and that the allocation of money between East and West, as discussed by Congress, meant a previous agreement among the Western Powers to rebuild Germany in any case and, reversing the Potsdam decision, to give great priority to defeated countries and a minimum to the Eastern States. In this event, it would have been futile and humiliating for Russia to attempt to block such plans. It is better, as one leading Polish Communist said to me, not to attend such a farcical conference—which would merely look weak—and, instead, to show America "we can do without dollars and stand on our own feet. America will understand better if we show that we are strong."

No one coming to Poland from the West can fail to be deeply impressed by the fundamental difference between the Eastern and Western attitude to Germany. In the West, America and Britain suffer from the expected reaction to Vansittart talk, which made proper de-nazification impossible because it lumped all Germans together. Now the American swing-back to pro-Germanism has been greatly intensified by the old illusion that a strong Germany would be a bulwark against Communism. English people, even when not so confused, will be unable to resist American plans because without dollars we can have no power in Germany.

Clearly the crux of the matter is Four-Power control of the Ruhr. Gomulka asked me whether Bevin had abandoned Socialisation of the Ruhr and whether Britain would ever agree to make a separate Western peace with Germany which would finally split both Europe and the world. This would seem terrible to the Poles, who no longer talk much about German atrocities, but who cannot feel anything but sheer horror and detestation of the Germans, as anyone staying in Warsaw—deliberately destroyed house by house—can understand. I talked to one Polish lady who saw the Ghetto burnt with houses full of people. On another occasion she saw a small Jewish boy who escaped from the Ghetto swept with the snow down a drain and an old Polish lady picked up by the heels and her brains knocked out against the wall because she carried ten hard-boiled eggs. All Poles have seen such things. Therefore, on the question of rebuilding Western Germany with American capital, the people of Eastern Europe—including the Catholic opposition—will be united. In that case, the Marshall Plan will consolidate the Soviet sphere.

KINGSLEY MARTIN

A LONDON DIARY

FOUR people have written to me since I stated that, in my view, there is no prospect of a Coalition, to tell me that last week a Minister admitted to a group of journalists in an off-the-record talk that, if there had to be a 25 per cent cut in our standard of living, the Tories would be made to share the responsibility. I have taken a good deal of trouble to investigate this story and am now convinced that a purely ironical remark was taken dead seriously by one of those present—hence the rumour. That it spread so quickly and was so readily believed by many keen Government supporters only shows the low state of morale before last Wednesday's Party meeting.

* * *

An auction of pretty Norwegian girls at Olympia is naturally a good press headline. But this rather unpleasant fiasco is only part of the story. It is a poor welcome to young people from Europe to billet them in deep shelters or with casual volunteers whose credentials have not been carefully checked. If a bad impression of British hospitality is thus created, the World Friendship Association, which is sponsoring these exchanges, must be held responsible. The trouble, I gather, is that the scheme has been too successful. The W.F.A. planned to move more than forty thousand boys and girls about Europe this summer, and its organisation—for all the good work that has already been done—broke down under the load. The idea itself was excellent. The need to help young people travel in spite of transport and other difficulties is to-day greater than ever. But the job is probably too big for one body to handle. The Reception Committee for Young People from Occupied Countries, which has brought thousands of children to recuperate in English homes during the last two years, was a registered war charity, and, as such, received considerable donations and some official help. This committee has done a wonderful job efficiently. But the W.F.A., which seeks to organise *au pair* visits on a grand scale, has found itself overwhelmed with aspiring travellers. Being a non-profit-making organisation, though it cannot collect as a charity, it has to operate on a limited budget which leaves little room for emergencies. But I hope that the breakdown last Sunday does not damage the present enthusiasm for exchanging our young people with those of Europe. The W.F.A. set out to do a necessary job. If it proves too complicated, surely there is room for other groups to join in the work?

* * *

Talking about summer holidays to a sub-Postmaster over the week-end, I was startled to learn that neither he, nor most of the other 18,000 sub-Postmasters in the country, will get a holiday this year, or next year, or as far they can see, any other year. Part of a sub-Postmaster's contract is that his Post Office should never close except at Bank Holidays. If he wants to go away, he may find a substitute, but he remains of course responsible. He can seldom find a substitute sufficiently experienced to manage the complexity of the accounts which now include all the business of Old Age Pensions, Family Allowances and Insurance cards. To go on a holiday often means coming back to find that mistakes have been made; sometimes there is a deficit of £30 or more, which has to be made good immediately out of the sub-Postmaster's own pocket. The sub-Postmaster with friends who often stay with him and help in the shop can delegate in reasonable confidence. But those are the fortunate few. The remainder decide to stay at home or acquire an Anxiety Neurosis speculating on the competence of the "temporary" left in charge. Compensations, of course, are considerable. In villages, the Post Office counter brings customers to the shop. In towns, the profits in the Post Office business, on a commission basis, frequently bring in £700 to £1,000 a year. The possibilities lure the unsuspecting into a life of non-stop working years. How to provide an occasional rest for the kindly couple who preside over the destinies of a community in the country? The solution seems to lie in sending out reliefs of regularly employed Post Office workers from the towns. That way the city worker would get a breath of fresh air, too. In the towns, sub-Post Offices, with their large turnover, have perhaps become an anachronism. They might be absorbed into the Crown Post Office system and the present incumbents given the job of running them, together with a holiday like other workers.

* * *

There is a lot, I suppose, to be said for gradualism in street repairs, as in politics. But, watching the snail's progress in the repaving of Holborn, I confess to a sneaking admiration for the uncompromising way in which things are done in totalitarian Belgrade. There, a colleague tells me, the authorities decided at the beginning of June that the ill-paved main thoroughfare was not worthy of the capital of the new Yugoslavia. Accordingly, regardless of temporary inconvenience to traffic, the whole street was torn up, so that a car which tried to travel the few hundred yards between the Foreign Office and the Headquarters of the Unrra Mission had to make a detour of a couple of miles. In three weeks, however, the army of roadworkers, supplemented by Youth Movement volunteers, employed on the job, had wrought a transformation: the whole street had been relaid in flawless macadam; trees had been planted along the pavements; overhead

cables had been installed; and a fleet of smart red trolley buses (reparations in kind from Italy) was plying up and down. At each bus stop a neat concrete shelter had been erected, complete with automatic telephones for passengers' use. Here we order things differently: the repaving of Holborn, carried out by small squads of workmen and in modest sections, enables East-West traffic to go on; but for weeks it has been impossible to reach this office by a West-East bus, and at the present rate of progress it looks as though the leaves will be off the trees before the job is finished. Is this an unconscious example of the painful compromises of democratic planning?

* * *

Many people, as long as they find the shelves of bookshops and libraries apparently well stocked, see no reason to worry about the book shortage and economy regulations. What if a book they want is unobtainable? So are the shirts and shoes they like. It is fairly easy to convince them that the newsprint cuts were a footling and misguided economy. But there are plenty of books. Why give the publishers a helping hand? Such people should read *The Battle of the Books* (*Allan Wingate*, 2s. 6d.). It gives a full account both of the material difficulties publishers and authors now have to face and of the comparatively tiny concessions they need from the Government to do their job decently. I think their case is unanswerable. Perhaps the reader may not agree with Sir Osbert Sitwell that he is "without an immortal soul, is born into a condemned cell, and now is not even allowed the comfort of a book to read in it." But these articles ought to make him realise that he will only get the books he needs and wants if he is ready to support this campaign by those who produce them.

* * *

Last week I made my third attempt to see *The Best Years of Our Lives* without queueing; and succeeded by paying 11s. 6d. Despite the heat wave, the cinema was crammed full and by the end of the three hours most of us were snivelling quietly. I expect the critics are right that artistically this is a bad film, but it is the best picture of Americans and of the American way of life which I have ever seen. If you don't like its characters or care what happens to them, if you don't like the drinking scenes and the hang-overs, or if you find the final marriage service "corny," then I think you are allergic to America itself. As I walked home it occurred to me that a very good test of whether a man was suitable for a job in the States would be to analyse his reactions to this film. This led up, naturally enough, to the question why films, quite often bad films, tell you more about national character than books or plays. In its own way *Les Enfants du Paradis* corresponds to *The Best Years of Our Lives*. It is also a film full of technical faults, but it is completely French, just as *Brief Encounter* is completely English. Indeed, the treatment of personal relations of men and women in these three films tells you more about the three countries than any number of sociological novels or plays. The French with their profound sense of individual dignity and with an emotional honesty which makes love a work of art; the Americans with a vitality and friendliness so abounding that it prevents long-drawn-out sentiment from becoming unbearably mawkish; and finally the tight little English situation in *Brief Encounter* which dominates the people in it, makes integrity equal disillusionment, and draws drama out of the mere acceptance of routine. No wonder the statesmen find it difficult to get on with each other round the conference table when the personal values of their respective countries are so widely different.

* * *

In many parts of the British Zone of Germany and the British Sector of Berlin there are big posters up in offices and on the walls, advertising two grand military tattoos which are to be held this August in Dortmund and in Berlin. It is surprising why no question has been put down on the Order Paper of the House of Commons asking whether they are part of our contribution to the re-education of the German people. Control Commission officials, who have frantically tried to stop the placards, tell me the Germans with whom they talk are completely bewildered, particularly as one of the placards portrays a British soldier in battledress equipped with what every German recognises as quite unmistakably the drum and drumsticks of the Hitler Youth. The *Stadtverwaltung* of Berlin was offered 200 tickets for schoolchildren but politely turned the offer down.

* * *

Here is a game which any family can play on holiday in an idle hour. Imagine that you are put back into Elizabethan times and that you wish to prove how superior modern man is to the Elizabethan. The problem is how each person present can do this. The more I wracked my brain, when it was tried on me, the more impotent I felt. I can drive a motor car, but I certainly don't know enough about the internal combustion engine to produce one. I suppose that I know a lot of geography, but how could I prove to the Elizabethans that I did? I can cook a bit, but are there any dishes I could produce better than the Elizabethans? My best chance would be to quote the few lines of poetry that I remember and pretend that I wrote them. Possibly some readers could do better.

* * *

Recently at Lake Success Mr. Gromyko was asked by an American correspondent to comment on Kravchenko's book, *I Chose Freedom*. He made no reply at the time; but after 24 hours the following statement was issued by the press officer of the Russian delegation: "When a dog has nothing to do, it leaks its underbelly. Sometimes this attracts spectators." Puzzled correspondents went to Gromyko for corroboration. He told them that he could not alter the text for fear of "losing its flavour." Some hours later the press officer of the Russian delegation issued a statement, "For 'leaks' read 'licks.' This is a very old Russian saying."

POLYCRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

A 5/- prize for the first entry in this column goes to F. M. Colclough.

Paste entries on postcard or slip of paper and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

Mr. Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, speaking at the miners' rally at Morpeth, Northumberland, said he had never worked in a Cabinet which had shown a better team spirit. There were no jealousies, no quarrels, no anything.—Report in *Observer*.

Police searched Euston and King's Cross areas during the night, visiting scores of boarding-houses, after a report that a parson in brown boots had been seen in a café eating a vegetable pie.—Report in *Evening Standard*.

Fined 7s. 6d. at Bristol yesterday for failing to stop his cycle at a halt sign, Alderman —— stated: "As a protest I intend to resign my seat on the Road Safety Council."—Report in *Daily Mail*.

This rule was included as a concession solely to cover the position of members who died whilst they were away on sick leave at reduced rates. It was contemplated that they would pay up any arrears on return to duty.—*Civil Service Opinion*.

Middlewich Housing and Open Spaces Committee had a seat placed at the junction of Kitfield Avenue and Booth Lane, but as complaints have been received of persons using the seat also using bad language, the seat is to be moved to another point on the same site.—Report in the *Northwich Guardian*.

Hampstead Council are to be asked to spend £27 10s. tiling the bathroom of their Pond Street day nursery because the children have tried to eat the wall plaster.—Report in *Evening Standard*.

YUGOSLAVIA

II.—THE LIFE OF THE PEOPLE.

THERE are two ways in which the visitor to Yugoslavia can approach the problem of evaluating what he sees. One way is to pose the stereotyped questions—Are opposition parties permitted, and are they allowed freely to run their own press?—and then, when the answer to both questions is found to be "No," to damn the whole regime and its social manifestations as a totalitarian blasphemy against the principles of democracy. With the exception of the Czech tourists who throng the Dalmatian coast, Western visitors to Yugoslavia are few and tend to view the country from the circumscribed angle of Belgrade. Biased by their preconceptions, they are only too ready to detect in the Youth Organisation, in the National Front's brigades of shock workers, and in the uniformity with which large photographs of Tito and Stalin confront each other from either end of every restaurant, café and public hall, the apparatus of *Gleichschaltung*. What they ignore (because they do not want to see it) is that "organisation" in Yugoslavia, through the Omladina, A.F.Z. and so forth, is not an imposed regimentation but a free, self-chosen discipline and unity of purpose derived straight from the Partisan movement and the National Committees of Liberation. As for the Marshal (whose attitude in the Cabinet appears, incidentally, to be much less despotic than that of Churchill or Lloyd George), there is, if you like, hero-worship; but of the *Führer prinzip* no trace. "We made him," an ex-Partisan motor mechanic said to me; "he's our man, and so long as he's that, we'll follow his lead."

The other way, which this writer found more congenial, of approaching the Yugoslavian set-up is to endeavour to discard preconceived Western notions of what should constitute a political democracy and to consider rather the very pertinent question whether the enjoyment of "freedom" by opposition parties would not in fact have created (as it has done in France) a selfish and disastrously obstructive resistance on the part of the peasants to the essential programme of reconstruction. Is the economic mess which is apt to result from the compromises of party disunity a price worth paying for "pure" democracy? After a month's fairly intimate contact with the common people of Yugoslavia, I am not sure that I am prepared to say "Yes." Not because I attach great importance to the argument frequently put to me—that the keenly debated choice of individual candidates for the National Front lists is essentially democratic—or because Yugoslavia has no black market or profiteering, but because it is patent to the unprejudiced observer that within a single-party political framework Yugoslavia is evolving a very real social democracy based on economic freedom.

With its acceptance of the principle that the land belongs to those who cultivate it, its deliberate encouragement of small artisan production and its toleration, for the present, of a quite substantial sector of private trade, the Government is building a society on lines which is far from being rigidly Marxist. Indeed, when allowance is made for the bitter history of the war years and the outrages of Ustachis and Chetniks, the degree of tolerance which Yugoslav Communists display to those whose opinions they despise, is surprising. At an impromptu Sunday morning party, to which I was invited, in a village farm near Skoplje, I noticed a very old peasant sitting quietly by himself in a corner. What does he think of the new Yugoslavia? I asked the secretary of the People's Committee of the village. All he wants, I was told, is that the Committee should build a church in the village. "Will you?" I asked. "Naturally; we are democrats. But we shall build alongside it a much grander Communist Hall of Culture." Certainly, despite the assertions of the Archbishop of Westminster, I can testify to the fact that in all the Republics which I visited the churches, both Orthodox and Roman, are open, and Mass is well attended.

In conversations with many priests, some of whom had served with the Partisans during the war, I was told that the parochial clergy, provided they confined their sermons to "the things which are God's," are in no way interfered with by the authorities. One Roman priest expressed to me the opinion that 98 per cent of the population could be reckoned as positive supporters of the regime.

That, I believe, may be an exaggeration. The industrial workers are with the Government to a man, and so are the peasants in the agriculturally backward areas. (In Macedonia in particular, the organisation of collective farms is going forward rapidly and successfully on voluntary lines.) But in the surplus food areas there is an undercurrent, not of active opposition to the Government but of grumbling that the process of grain collection has been harshly applied, that grain prices have been fixed too low in the light of the past two years' drought-ravaged crops, and that supplies of consumer goods in the village Zadrugas (Co-operative Stores) are still disappointingly meagre. This year's good harvest, coupled with the steadily growing flow of clothing and household requisites on sale, should go far to allay this discontent; but potentially it is probably the most serious political problem which the Government has to face.

The "Opposition," in the sense of the small remaining residue of bourgeois malcontents, is as insignificant politically as it is vocal in its diatribes to the supposedly sympathetic visitor from the West. On a crowded steamer between Split and Dubrovnik, a glossy young woman told me at the top of her voice that the Red tyranny in Yugoslavia was worse than anything which I could have read about Russia. Her father, owner of a bank, had been sentenced after the Liberation to two years' imprisonment for having collaborated with the Italians ("What else could a bank do but collaborate?"). True, he had been released after six months; but the Partisans had committed worse outrages. They had left the family in possession of their villa, but simply because they wanted furniture for a children's hospital, they had removed six beds from the villa's unoccupied rooms. And now, how were she and her brother to live? One could not get work unless one was a member of the Communist Party. Not even on the Youth Railway? my wife mildly asked. We left it at that.

That such conversations can take place in public is either a poor tribute to the efficiency of the Secret Police, or reflects (as I think it does) the confidence of the Government that the solid core of the country—the workers and peasants—are behind them. It is not a matter of blind acceptance of the administration as perfect. I had many minor administrative muddles and mistakes pointed out to me, both by peasants and manual workers and by many ex-capitalists who have taken up managerial posts in nationalised undertakings which they formerly owned. Personally I ran into one or two instances of bureaucratic inefficiency infuriating until one remembered that the war and the revolution left Yugoslavia desperately short of trained administrative personnel, so that many officials both in the Federal and in the Republics' Governments are doing two or three men's jobs, as well as sometimes acting as university lecturers in their spare time. But if there is criticism, there is also a universal sense among the common people that Yugoslavia is at last "their" country, and that, however slowly and painfully, things are improving every month. International comparisons of standards of living are apt to be misleading; but, when allowance is made for the extremely low rent (about 5*s.* a week) which he normally pays, and his social assurance benefits and cheap holidays, I should say that the unskilled or semi-skilled Yugoslav worker is already living about as well on his average wage of 80*s.* a week as his opposite number in Britain. Certainly he is better off than he was before the war. The skilled workers are now approaching their pre-war "real wage" level; but the technicians, and the professional men, are still appreciably worse off than they were in 1938, and, judged by British standards, are underpaid. Indeed, I am inclined to think that if the many thousands of new technicians and managers for whose services the Five-Year Plan calls are to be secured, it may be necessary to raise the present ceiling of about £6 a week which represents the average income of this class.

For the moment, the Partisan spirit inherited from the indelible memories of the war is carrying the country forward on a wave of constructive enthusiasm which makes nonsense of the assertion that Yugoslavia is a police state, in subjection to a coterie of doctrinaire Communists. There is no direction of labour. Differential rationing is the only "imposed" incentive; and I know no European country in which the police are fewer in numbers or less dictatorial in their relations with the populace. As for the Communist Party, its conception of the role it should play in the State appeared to me to be undergoing a marked change. In the immediate aftermath of the revolution, the Party undoubtedly suffered from a hang-over from the period of pre-war illegality; it still regarded itself to some extent as an underground movement even though all the key positions in the Government were in its hands. To-day, though the pre-war law outlawing Communism has (oddly enough) never been repealed, the Party is much more openly avowing its existence as the spearhead of social progress. Though the only real social aristocracy in present-day Yugoslavia consists of those who joined the Partisans in 1941 and proudly wear the silver star on their coats, it is the Communists who are the dynamic force in the trade unions, in the People's Committees and in the Youth and Anti-Fascist Women's organisations by whom, rather than by the Government, the actual work of reconstruction and social reform is being carried out.

Yugoslavia, devasted by the war to an extent which must be seen to be believed, has still a hard path to tread. Her progress towards abundant economic prosperity is likely to depend more, perhaps, than most Yugoslavs are ready to admit on the development of trading relations with the Western democracies. But whether she is helped by the West or not, whether her complete recovery be a matter of five years or ten, her ultimate emergence as a rich and well-balanced economy is, I am convinced, assured. Great natural resources lie ready to the hand of a people who are working with a prodigious zeal and gusto. One carries away from Yugoslavia not merely, or mainly, memories of the already impressive achievements in the way of rebuilding, but unforgettable impressions of the infectious enthusiasm which makes a whole nation sing as it works, of the passionate energy with which the boys and girls on the Youth Railways throw themselves into sports and educational instruction when the seven-hour shift is over, of the lorries bringing brigades of shock-workers back from work at night-fall—accordions playing, red flags fluttering over laughing faces.

In her break into the past, Yugoslavia may have jettisoned the blessings of political democracy. Instead, she has created a society in which men and women, on a footing of complete equality of pay and conditions, enjoy economic security; in which effort to the limit of one's strength is enforced not by state edict but by the pressure of uncoerced public opinion; and in which you may see (as I did in Budva) cement-grimed building workers sitting at drinks with the Finance Minister of the Republic in the mirrored dining-room of a hotel built to accommodate members of the royal Court in days when a quisling prince had a villa nearby. "Come and join us, comrades," one of the party called out to my wife and myself sitting alone at a nearby table. The friendliness and hospitality shown everywhere—in cafés, trains, and lorry-buses—to two unimportant visitors from an "enemy" country—these, not the acrimonious interchanges of diplomatic Notes between Belgrade and the West, reflect the spirit of the people of Yugoslavia.

AYLMER VALLANCE

THE CHARM OF POLITICS

IT is commonly assumed that people enter politics because they desire power. But the most cursory examination of the character of politicians is sufficient to contradict this old-wives' tale. There are, of course, Members of Parliament whose object is to shape the affairs of men in their own likeness and whose keenest pleasure is the mastering of a crisis. But they are few in number; and, in this country—when we are not at war—they are usually suspected or even disliked by their colleagues. The vast majority of British politicians, like the rest of their fellow-creatures, desire success without too much effort and shudder if ever the moment comes when decision is unavoidable and power must be exercised ruthlessly.

What, then, is the common characteristic of politicians? What are the motives which lead them to accept nomination as parliamentary candidates or to appear more humbly on Party platforms? What is there about the House of Commons which imparts to the defeated Member a sense of exile, never to be eradicated, though sometimes softened by elevation to the Lords? I know one Labour Member, a mild and unassuming man, whose prosperous business is now being ruined by neglect. He will never receive office; yet he told me recently that, after he lost his seat in 1931, he never once walked down Whitehall until he was re-elected for fear of suffering the pang which the sight of Palace Yard would give him. What he missed was certainly not *personal* power. Treading the lobbies under the cold eyes of the Whips, queueing for skinless sausages in the tearoom at 3 a.m., or failing to catch the Speaker's eye for a whole day—the average Member enjoys less power than a sergeant in the Army or a London bus conductor.

The cynic will say that the lowest common denominator of our politicians is their vanity. We all like the sound of our own voices and have an inflated sense of our own importance. Politicians are ambitious not to *make* important decisions but to *say* important things—and to read them next day in Hansard. This is certainly part of the truth. The politician has a streak of the actor in him. He craves for the musty corridors of St. Stephen's as the actor craves for the backstage smells and draughts. What he desires is public life—to "be in" on great events, preferably as a star, but if not, with a one-line part. "Better a failure at Westminster than fame in the nether regions outside" is the inner belief which we all share.

> It is indeed as a never-ending adventure that political life most appears in retrospect, a great game with its "Routs and discomfitures, rushes and rallies," its "Fights for the fearless and goals for the eager." A game in thinking back over which one may often be inclined to wonder "had I done this, had I left that undone" . . . . On the whole one remains content to believe that the game itself was good and that one played one's best for one's own chosen goals and by one's own rules.

So Mr. Amery, in his admirable Chichele lectures* delivered to Oxford undergraduates, after 34 years' unbroken service in the House, almost equally divided between the front and the back benches. Forcibly retired from the game, he sits back to reflect on its rules and give his mature judgments on the Constitution, Parliamentary procedure and the Commonwealth. Very possibly this brief but thoughtful book will have more influence on British politics than any speeches Mr. Amery might have delivered in this House as Member for Sparkbrook. But Mr. Amery will not believe this. He has become a House of Commons man. He did not, in the misleading language of obituaries, "devote himself to public life": he was captured by it, enslaved body and soul, until the game was life itself.

* *Thoughts on the Constitution.* By L. S. AMERY. *O.U.P.* 8*s.* 6*d*

Dr. H. A. L. Fisher, of whom David Ogg has written a short biography,* was an academic for most of his life. Until he was 47, he served as History Tutor at New College, Oxford, and for the last fifteen years of his life he was Warden of it. Only from 1916 to 1925 did he sit in the House of Commons, first as President of the Board of Education in Lloyd George's two Coalition Governments, and then briefly as a Liberal back-bencher. Yet for Fisher, despite his brilliance as a teacher and his standing as a man of letters, those nine years were worth all the rest. Shortly after his return to Oxford he wrote to his oldest friend, Gilbert Murray:—

> The mere atmosphere of the House of Commons, contrary to the general opinion, is so much higher and more serious than it is in a university, that is, if one considers the men who matter in the House.

Mr. Ogg, a history tutor at New College, is obviously somewhat shocked by this disclosure. He comments drily "of this unusual point of view he gave few hints to his colleagues"; and in so doing reveals his incapacity to understand Fisher. For the secret of Fisher's greatness as a Warden was that he was a politician *manqué*. Despising the academic pedant, he made himself a living reminder of that public life, outside the cloister, of which history should be a mirror. His *History of Europe* is not, as Mr. Ogg suggests, the climax of a coolly successful career, the work of a man who "would not have sacrificed himself for a losing cause, still less for a lost one." Thucydides lost a battle and was dismissed from his command. He consoled himself by writing the greatest history of war. Fisher went down with Lloyd George and turned defeat into victory by the *History of Europe*.

What a biography to write, and how Mr. Ogg has messed it up! It is possible to criticise Fisher or even to make him into a figure of fun—and still to understand him. His defects were obvious enough. He could mistake portentousness for dignity and conceal a lack of courage under high-sounding words. He was sometimes snobbish and inclined to foul his academic nest. His enemies called him "stuck-up" and his friends "buttoned-up." Both descriptions point to his habit of mistaking the postures of greatness for greatness itself, the exterior trappings for style. If Mr. Ogg, riled by years of frigid condescension on the part of Fisher, had chosen to get his own back at last, I would not have blamed him. But instead he has written a formal encomium, peppered with disparagement and doughy with donnish excursions, which reveals much about the author but completely obfuscates the character of Fisher.

Mr. Ogg gives the reader Baedeker descriptions of the Oxford tutorial system, British education and the weaknesses of Acton as an historian. He fails to tell us about Fisher as a tutor, as author of the Education Act or as an admirer of Acton. He alludes to Fisher's family but tells us nothing of his intimate friendship with his cousins, Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf and his brothers-in-law, F. W. Maitland and Vaughan Williams. If Fisher had merely been a silly politician and second-rate academic, as Ogg implies, how did he manage to retain such friendships, not to mention the devotion of a wife and daughter far too able to suffer fools gladly?

Enough of David Ogg. Let us hope that the publication of his mean and scholastic exercise will stimulate someone else to undertake an adequate biography. For Fisher remains a significant figure in Parliamentary history, an academic Liberal alongside Bryce and Morley, and an historian in the godless tradition of Gibbon, if not comparable with him. What made him a brilliant tutor and, by Ogg's criterion, a bad historian, was precisely his hankering for public life. He taught history not as an intellectual exercise for future Civil Servants, but as an introduction to the only game which mattered to him. Milner's Kindergarten, who together achieved for South Africa what the present Government is now achieving for India, were, every one of them, his pupils. He may not always have recommended to them the latest source book on mediævalism: what he gave them was an insight into humane statesmanship, a sense of literary style and a radical suspicion of religion as a cloak for mundane ambition.

His move from Oxford to Sheffield University and service on an Indian Commission were steps towards public life. Then in 1914 came membership of the Bryce Commission on Belgian atrocities and in 1916 a trip to France to study French propaganda methods. Finally, in the autumn of 1916, he breakfasted with Lloyd George to discuss peace terms and advocate a compromise peace. He was defeated in the argument—not for the last time; but he formed a friendship, almost neglected by Ogg, which was to determine his whole life. Urbane, academic and a little complacent, he was captivated by the Prime Minister. Here in one personality were all the qualities which he lacked and unconciously longed for, the political imagination, unfettered by learning, the sleight of hand, the magnetism and joy in life of the natural politician. At the age of 51 Fisher entered politics as a Cabinet Minister and devotee of Lloyd George.

Long afterwards a young Don in his College was asking himself whether to stay in Oxford or whether to take the plunge into politics. Fisher sent for him to tell him that he would recommend that his Fellowship be renewed for seven years. Then he said, "Now let me talk to you, not as Warden, but as a personal friend. I stayed in Oxford too long, and I went into politics at the top. That was the cause of my failure. Go in now while you are young. I can see that you have the desire for it which I had at your age. Whether you succeed or fail does not matter. It is the life which matters. I would like you to avoid my mistakes."

I took the Warden's advice, and am eternally grateful to a Fisher whom David Ogg never new. In the last years he exerted a great influence on young men, partly at least because for him Oxford was a second best. After the fall of Lloyd George he had tried at first to remain in politics. But he had no private means and, belonging to his own generation, he could not turn naturally to journalism. Reluctantly he buttoned himself up again in academic costume, revealing himself only to his oldest friends and to his youngest colleagues and pupils. With his wife and daughter he made his home into an oasis in the pedant desert of post-war Oxford.

I shall never forget how on Sunday evenings he would stand in his chapel stall, chilly as an up-ended sarcophagus, listening to the service whose traditions he admired but whose creed he dismissed with eighteenth-century elegance. Afterwards, at the High Table in Hall, among the chirruping of busy Dons, he would sit silent for course after course, expressing boredom with all the grandeur of Aristotle's Great Hearted Man. But then, back in his study in the Warden's lodging, in the company of Gilbert Murray, or Hilaire Belloc, of Graham Wallas or General Smuts, and surrounded by awed undergraduates, he would recapture the ecstasy which he had too briefly and too tardily tasted. The chilly effigy melted into life; the hooded, pale-blue eyes glistened with ironic tolerance of his elderly colleagues and with real affection for his young men, while he talked of politics and lived himself back to his seat at the Cabinet table in Downing Street or the League Council at Geneva or the Smoking Room of the House of Commons. Even more memorable to a very few of us were the week-ends at his cottage, which always culminated in the walk up to Churt for dinner with L.G. There, at either end of the table, sat thesis and antithesis, the well-born academic and the self-made Welshman, united by their passion for the game from which both had been forcibly retired.

This is the real stuff of Fisher's biography and the real background of the *History of Europe*. Fisher's last book is a masterpiece because it captures the Liberal attitude to politics and carves it, hard and precise as an inscription, upon the tables of history. Content and style are fused in a whole, more philosophic, if less brilliant, than Macaulay. No mere academic could have composed it nor yet a mere politician. It is the work of a scholarly mind which fell in love with public life, of a politician who, out of his personal frustration, fashioned the abiding monument to his cause.

Studying Mr. Amery's reflections and reading between the lines of Mr. Ogg, we can begin to find an answer to the question: What makes a British politician? First, a tradition of public service; then a dash of vanity and another of self-importance and, added to these, a streak of rebelliousness, a pleasure in good talk for its own sake, and in gregarious living. These, much more than the desire for personal power, are the qualities of the individual Member. But the individual is shaped into his final form by the institution itself. It is Parliament which takes hold of the players, taming the natural dictator and girding on the lazy, and teaches them all the principle which Mr. Amery unerringly picks out as the essence of parliamentary life—that each may shoot his own goals by his own rules, provided that he believes that the game itself is good.

R. H. S. CROSSMAN

* *Herbert Fisher.* By DAVID OGG. *Arnold.* 10s. 6d.

NO COAL IN THE SCUTTLE

(To the tune of "There's a Hole in My Bucket.")

"There's no coal in my scuttle, dear people, dear people,
There's no coal in my scuttle and I'm in a hole."
"Then *why* don't you fill it, dear Ernie, dear Ernie?
Why *don't* you ask miners to raise you more coal?"

"But *how* can I ask them, good people, good people,
And *why* should the miners increase their supply,
Unless you make radios and roadsters and clothing,
Unless you make goods for the miners to buy?"

"But *how* can they buy them, dear Ernie, dear Ernie,
When all that we make we are bound to export?"
"You must jack up production, dear workers, dear workers,
There's no coal in my scuttle if miners go short."

"There's a gap in my exports, dear comrades, dear comrades,
You must turn out more exports to close up the gap."
"But *how* can we do it, Sir Stafford, Sir Stafford?
Without raw materials, Sir Stafford, old chap!"

"But *how* can I buy them, good comrades, good comrades?
I'm near to the end of American aid;
I must starve the home market, you nitwits, you nitwits,
Until I've adjusted the balance of trade."

"Make more for my miners, my miners, my miners,
A national debt to the miners is owed."
"But *how* can we do it, dear Manny, dear Manny,
When all-out production means shedding the load?"

"You must stagger production, dear Unions, dear Unions,
While spreading the shortage your output must soar."
"But *how* will that help us, dear Herbie, dear Herbie,
While the output of miners is less than before?"

"Then give them incentives, you blighters, you blighters!"
"Go to it, you slackers, in spite of the cuts!"
"How *can* we go to it, dear Manny, dear Herbie,
When shortage of imports the factory shuts."

"Expansion of exports is Britain's objective!"
"Reduction of imports must be Britain's goal!"
"But you *can't* have it both ways, dear Earnie, dear Stafford!"
"There's no coal in my scuttle, dear miners, no coal . . . . ."

SAGITTARIUS

The Arts and Entertainment

THE MOVIES

(Miss Arnot Robertson is taking Mr. Whitebait's place during his holiday.)

"Nora Prentiss," at the Warners' Theatre.
"The Web," at the Tivoli.

"All the Robertson they ever loved rolled into one" refrained from going to the Empire on your behalf to see Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's film, *Living in a Big Way*, because she suspected that you might think her biassed. An unworthy thought for you to harbour, of course, but then you know what you are about harbouring unworthy thoughts.

Nora Prentiss and *The Web* are both competently made and competently played thrillers, well above the Whodunit level but nowhere near the *Double Indemnity* class. They deal, one gaily and one sadly, with murder or suspected murder, infidelity, drink and embezzlement, and your personal preference is quite likely to depend on whether you feel that sin ought, or ought not, to have at least some jolly aspects; just sometimes, if only to offset the hideousness of its inevitable results, in any film which is going to get past the Hays Office.

Rarely have I seen such a gloomy set of sinners as in *Nora Prentiss*. They don't seem to have the gift of happiness in any circumstances, from the night-club singer who goes through a whole number under the spot-light with tears in her eyes, to the respectable doctor who leaves his wife, family and practice for her, after struggling against temptation, and then takes to remorse and the bottle. Ingeniously arranged as it is, there is no surprise in his final resolve to be executed under an alias for a crime he has not committed—his own murder—after being horribly disfigured in a motor accident, for, as he says, while begging the singer to keep quiet about his identity, what has he to live for? What, indeed. I have never been able to see any sense in sin, unless one has fun with it.

Kent Smith plays the central character of the doctor with a sort of nervous niceness which I found very convincing and effective: much more effective than the niceness of Ann Sheridan as the cabaret girl with a brassy manner but a really good heart. It is easy enough to believe in the good heart, the brassy manner isn't anything like brassy enough; it suggests pure gold all the way through: very refined gold, too. But on the whole the picture is a neat piece of plot-making.

The Web has much more gusto. For one thing it has that excellent, suave portrayer of evil men, Vincent Price, here shown as an unscrupulous financier more excellently suave than I have yet seen him; and there is no question whether or not he enjoys his own crookedness. He revels in it, in his detached, gentlemanly way. To hear him say softly, almost wistfully, "He died protesting his innocence," in answer to a question about the fate of a wretched little accomplice whom he has obviously bumped off—no, "bumped" is altogether too violent and athletic a word: "insinuated into the hereafter" would give a better impression of his methods—this is to know the full flavour of wickedness that is incapable of pity or remorse, of any human emotion, in fact, except megalomania.

Of the two main figures who come to grief in these films, and are obviously bound for ultimate misfortune, almost from the start, there is no doubt that the somewhat weak but kindly doctor is a much more appealing fellow than the steel-nerved company promoter. And if either picture were a serious study of humanity in distress through its own fault, the one about the more ordinary and sympathetic character would almost certainly be the more interesting. But in a thriller, where crime and detection are no more than moves in a mental game, and the characters mainly props to support the plot, it is not the humanities but the pace, the cleverness and the polish which count; gusto before goodness in fact, and *The Web* is the faster and slicker if not the more probable.

Although the wisecracking is too persistent for my taste, Edmond O'Brien gives full value to one or two really pleasing lines, as the innocent little lawyer who stumbles into a big business racket and brings it crashing down, almost by accident: and William Bendix has the role for which that vast, expressionless face seems to have been built, the stupid-seeming police officer who isn't the fool he looks. I must have seen him play practically the same part about half a dozen times now, never without satisfaction.

E. ARNOT ROBERTSON

RADIO NOTES

MIGHT it not be a good thing if, at such seasons as this, some critics were required to swap roles, so that for a month Mr. Marsland Gander or Mr. C. E. Williams had to pay serious attention to the Third, while Mr. Hope Wallace and I were forbidden to listen to anything but the Light? Personally I know full well that I should never find anything pertinent to say about *Monday Night at the Casino*, or *Ignorance is Bliss*, or even *Focus*. This may sound like snoot, but it isn't. The first duty of a critic is to recognise his limitations, and those to whom such programmes are not addressed—whose mental response is chiefly to something rather different—are wiser to ignore them. The view that it is the business of a radio critic to have (or pretend to have) an opinion on every subject included by the B.B.C.'s schedule, is a typical modern heresy, similar to that which requires a man to cook his own dinner as well as earn it. The critic is only a listener who has trained himself to listen in a certain way; to him, as to many others, some kinds of broadcast are neither agreeable nor disagreeable, and he should no more dream of criticising them than of condemning the aesthetic appearance of a threshing machine. It was with some such idea as this that I switched on the first of the *John Quixote* programmes. Six minutes were enough to convince me that this broadcast was too relentlessly Mancunian to provide grist for any mill of mine. So I can't suggest to you whether Mr. Wilfred Pickles or Mr. Anthony Holles acted well or not. There seemed plenty of life in the programme: I could tell that much.

To return to my muttons, there are two series—one ended for the present, the other apparently still in being—upon which a few general comments may be of use. The first, *Imaginary Conversations*, has proved enduringly attractive. Even when the scripts were not so good, the general atmosphere was intelligent, stimulating, imaginative. It will be regrettable if clever Mr. Rayner Heppenstall is not entrusted with a further lease of life for these programmes—not only because he edited and produced them with increasing adroitness but because there is still a mass of suitable material waiting to be adapted to the form. In many cases the adaptation would need to be very slight: I am thinking especially of Gobineau's very curious *La Renaissance*, which is a set of dramatic tableaux in the Landor style, but containing more action; and also of the plays which that equivocal man of genius, Henri de Montherlant, has written since the outbreak of the late war. *La Reine Morte*, which tells the tragic story of Inez de Castro in language which clearly owes much of its nobility to the example of Claudel; *Le Maître de Santiago*, a secret session in ancient Spain, wrapped in falling snow; *Fils de Personne*, a contemporary "problem" play, with a magnificent part for that prodigious juvenile, David Spenser. All these plays are most eloquent and imaginative, but with the possible exception of *Fils de Personne* they would, I surmise, be insufficiently stageworthy. They are really "imaginary conversa-

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tions," in which the drama is that of a conflict of ideas. As such, they should make excellent radio.

The second series I have in mind is *International Drama*. There seems to be something wrong (I am not quite sure what it is) with the *form* of these programmes. Considered as efforts to boil down a "world masterpiece," not one has really come off. All the cooks were excellent, but the results were—well, something not unlike the dog's dinner. Perhaps there were too many cooks at a time . . . I suspect, however, that the attempt to combine a lecture with a plot that was usually melodramatic and always complicated, and both with a severely truncated version of the play itself, in a more or less speakable translation, must, in any case, have defeated its own end.

EDWARD SACKVILLE WEST

CURRENT PAINTING

Two mixed exhibitions, at the Leicester and Redfern Galleries, offer a very fair panorama of current English painting, though several of our best artists are represented feebly or not at all. Counsel for the Prosecution may denounce the absence of that sensuality which most great artists have expressed, from Botticelli to Bonnard. To depict a desirable body is now mysteriously taboo, and there are precious few of our painters who reveal a strong response to the physical enjoyability even of fruit, flowers or animals. Counsel for the Defence can answer that artists are still bound to react against the chocolate-box style propagated by the Royal Academy, and that they are rightly more concerned with constructing objects than with representing subjects. Summing up, his Lordship, I think, will admit extenuating circumstances, quote a dictum from Renoir about what part of the body one should paint with, and sentence the defendants to six months on the Mediterranean, during which they are to paint only what fires their appetites. And this will be only rough justice, since there has always been a small, a very small, minority of good artists indifferent to what I have clumsily called "physical enjoyability."

Rather than mention once again the names of painters whom I have repeatedly praised and who can be trusted to produce interesting work, I should like to mention two whose names I have not hitherto noticed in catalogues, a sculptor called Facita Fontana and a painter called Haig, each of whom reveals unusual gifts. And then I must call attention to a landscape at the Leicester Galleries by a friend of mine who has recently died, Thomas Lowinsky. He began by painting curiously unfashionable, mythological subjects in a pre-Raphaelite style. (This was the more surprising as he had admirable taste which he revealed in forming a superb collection of English drawings of all periods.) Next he made a series of portraits in a very tight, exact manner derived from Holbein and the early Flemings—vastly accomplished but, I think, too frigid to be expressive. For some reason—lack of self-confidence, perhaps—he seemed inhibited from exploiting effectively his still and profound knowledge. Then in his last picture, the "Garsington" now on view, he arrived at what strikes me as an extraordinary achievement. It is a largish landscape, painted in prodigious detail, as if by a miniaturist. No detail, however, obtrudes, and the picture remains in tone throughout. Thus it attains what I should have thought was an impossible aim, and by way of more than photographic fidelity to appearances arrives at a work of art. I have never before seen anything like it, and probably never shall, for such a technique will hardly excite imitation, entailing as it does a labour that seems disproportionate to the advantages it brings. As a successful and indeed unique experiment, this landscape deserves most careful attention from everyone interested in the means of pictorial expression, and deserves an honoured place in one of our museums.

At the Marlowe Galleries, 40, Elizabeth Street, Eaton Square, there are highly pleasing drawing and watercolours by Mr. John Harrison, an Englishman who paints very French.

ROGER MARVELL

BALLET

Col. de Basil's new company, rather quaintly called Original Ballet Russe, brings us many long-lost favourites and one entirely delightful novelty, Lichine's *Graduation Ball*. It also brings us Riabouchinska and Lichine, for whom we are very grateful, and Serge Grigorieff, without whose prodigious memory the revival of many of these great ballets would be impossible. The company has, it is true, only one star, Riabouchinska, but it has some fine talent and evidently a great capacity for hard work, for the ensemble improves at each performance. The corps-de-ballet in *Sylphides* is, indeed, unusually good; but in the soloists, with the exception of Riabouchinska, and possibly of Larkina, the "flower" is still lacking. *Paganini*, in which the piano solo is again brilliantly played by Eric Harrison, is remarkable for the splendid miming of Dokoudovsky in the name part, and by Riabouchinska's vertiginous "possessed" dance in the pastoral episode, which is technically one of the most difficult ever designed. The rather mawkish sentiment of the last scene seemed under better control than of old, and the performance of the ballet as a whole was excellent. About *Les Présages* I would rather write later in the season, when the ensembles, which are still very raw, have ripened. Riabouchinska, as Folly, was enchanting, and Komarova, Lichine and Orloff gave fine performances. *Graduation Ball*, with Lichine's choreography to Strauss's music, and scenery and costumes by Alexandre Benois, is delicious entertainment with wonderful sparkle and high spirits, and a charm which seems of Petersburg, Russia, rather than America. Besides Riabouchinska and Lichine, Barbara Lloyd, Larkina, Orloff, Taras and Paul Grinwis (as the head-mistress) are a sheer delight; and in the dance competition Geneviève Moulin and Renée Jeanmarie show great virtuosity. The orchestra, under Fistoulari and Beck, must be mentioned as quite exceptionally good.

BERYL DE ZOETE

THE THEATRE

"Peace in Our Time," at the Lyric

Mr. Coward in patriotic vein which was never his strength: his patriotism, like his sermonising, is embarrassingly 1910. To this he smartly adds the new fashion: guilt. We are guilty because we were not invaded and occupied in 1940, because we had no concentration camps and no resistance movement. How should we have behaved? Mr. Coward goes straight to the heart of English patriotism and resistance, the Saloon Bar, Sloane Street area; and there, while the Gestapo and the regulars pop in and out, Fred Shattock, the proprietor, cautiously registers the fluctuations of our feeling. One had the impression that the Nazis had no mild intention of enduring the national sense of humour or indeed of leaving any male customer in the Saloon Bar; but Mr. Coward takes his chance and is not only brilliant in his management of an episodic play, but finished and faithful in his Cockney sketches. There is a large cast. The comedy is quick; the horror is short but sharp enough to break in those who are training for M. Sartre; the finale is straight out of the *B.O.P.* Some critics complain that we intellectuals are a destructive race, hostile to all governments, chronic dissidents; but after Mr. Coward's engaging portrait of Mr. Chorley Bannister, the Left-Wing editor, we are exonerated. Notorious for our support of Nazi expansion, the welcome we gave to Munich and our hatred of Shakespeare, we are, of course, predestined collaborators. By the same argument, M. Sacha Guitry, who collaborated in France, was a Left Wing highbrow, not a popular actor-playwright! Special attention must be drawn to the performances of Daphne Madox, Brian Carey, Beatrice Varley, and, above all, to the delicious study in soppiness by Dora Bryan, as the barmaid.

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PALESTINE

SIR,—Isn't it time our politicians gave a thought to British lives being lost in Palestine? Debate has followed debate in the House, and the altruists who govern us express their concern for the future of Jewry, their solicitude for the rights of the Arabs, but hardly a murmur about the third community, and surely to Britishers the most important, the British Army out there? We, of the British Army in Palestine, couldn't care less about the rights of Jew and Arab—(shocked cries from the socially conscious!) The Jew will take care of his own rights, the Arab his.

It was the same in India, Sir Stafford Cripps, etc., simpering over Gandhi and Jinnah, so, so concerned about the future of India; while Indian National Army men who fought against our lads in the jungles of Burma and tortured their fellow-countrymen who remained loyal, were free to strut about India, making sanguinary speeches before adoring multitudes!

It's sickening! I'm beginning to hate idealists!

A SERGEANT FROM PALESTINE

GREECE

SIR,—Mr. Pryor is so obviously prejudiced that I would have hesitated to enter into argument with him over his article in THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION of July 5th, but recent events impel me to draw attention to one or two of his statements which call for correction.

For example, he says the Army is already three times its normal strength of 50,000, and it is now proposed to double it, i.e., to bring it up to a total of 300,000 men. That is just nonsense. The Greek Army at present numbers 100,000 men and it is proposed—with the full concurrence of British and U.S. military experts—to raise it to 130,000 men. That is a much bigger army than Greece needs in normal times, but these are *not* normal times, for the Greek State is confronted with armed rebellion at home and has also to consider a very real threat from aggressive neighbours to the north, as the U.N. Balkan Commission's Report clearly shows.

Another point where Mr. Pryor is hopelessly off the mark is his description of the guerrillas as "resolute men who are moved by hunger, oppression and intolerable injustice to embrace what to them seems the lesser of two evils." That is not how the Greek man-in-the-street sees things at all. I will not deny that there are to be found among the bands men who are animated by the sentiments Mr. Pryor mentions; but to suggest that the guerrillas consist exclusively of such men, or even that this category constitutes anything more than a small minority, is simply to betray abysmal ignorance of the facts.

A comparison of the German Army's fight against the Greek Resistance during the occupation with the Greek Army's present campaign against the guerrilla bands, and the drawing of conclusions therefrom, ignores this vital difference: that the Germans were fighting against men who were defending the honour of Greece and who could invariably rely on the material and moral support of the entire population, whereas the Greek Army is now waging a campaign against bands which are fighting a foreign-inspired war and who rely exclusively on terrorism. The brutal reprisals carried out at Nigrita last Tuesday on the families of Communists who had refused to join the bands are typical of their methods.

Greek Information Office. A. A. PALLIS

FRENCH SCIENCE

SIR,—Ritchie Calder rightly stresses the need for Anglo-French co-operation in scientific research, and says that any material aid we could give to French scientists would be of immense help. I think that a comparison of the states of minds in which research is approached in the two countries would be of interest. After liberation, French scientists, with courageous moral sense, and in spite of their country's military and political traditions, rejected completely the thesis of an atomic armaments race and in so doing became a source of hope and inspiration to internationally-minded scientists all over the world. Their British counterparts, however, have refused to face the logic of the situation, and have allowed themselves to be coaxed into accepting a position in which, once more, they become the mere tools of military strategists on both sides of the Atlantic. As a result of the concentration of nuclear research on atomic weapons, fundamental research in the universities is suffering not only from apparatus shortages but also from the effects of restricted interchange of information. The latter was noticeable at the recent International Congress of Chemistry (the organisation of which, incidentally, must have left a lamentable impression of British efficiency in the minds of the delegates) from which was excluded more than half the interesting fundamental work done in the last five years.

Nevertheless, we should take all the steps we can to render material aid, though no doubt the British Government would be reluctant to help on atomic energy projects. If France is short of scientists I would suggest that she takes the first step by recruiting many of the younger researchers in other countries who would welcome the opportunity of working for a project whose ultimate aim is peace. Whether we can give her much material aid is uncertain, but there is no doubt that our scientists have need of all the spiritual guidance that France can offer.

"RESEARCH STUDENT"

GERMAN YOUTH

SIR,—Returning from Germany I have just read Mr. Brailsford's article "German Youth in Conference." I agree with him on the value of constructive contacts between Germans and others. But let them be constructive. At present it appears that too many meetings hope to achieve collaboration by avoiding all the topics which the Germans must face before we can expect them to make a contribution to German and European reconstruction.

In particular, we ought to try to obtain a clearer appreciation of German universities. Mr. Brailsford feels that the students he met at Munich are "all that is hopeful in the German youth of to-day." It would be a grim outlook for Germany and Europe if he were right. Certainly, there are some good people at the universities; but the bulk are there to avoid doing an honest job of work, clinging to a social status the basis of which has been destroyed by the two wars. At Kiel, where the number of students is now four times what it was in 1938, a group of undergraduates complained to me about their overcrowded conditions. We were standing underneath a large yellow poster offering jobs, both skilled and unskilled, in an engine repair shop in the Ruhr. Something must be wrong with German youth when the many universities are overcrowded and the few factories cannot get the necessary labour.

Military Government and the voluntary relief organisations should make their first care the young men whom it is vital to attract to the mines or to industry. Living conditions for the German equivalents of the Bevin boys are reliably reported to be a disgrace. No wonder most of them abscond soon after arriving in the Ruhr. The few resources Mil.Gov. and voluntary organisations have got should first be used to improve the material lot and the recreational facilities of the young recruits to the mines. At present our well-meant efforts to help the universities are recreating the same academic proletariat which proved such a powerful supporter for Hitler. The new Germany will never be able to find acceptable jobs for these hordes of undergraduates.

We have not even got the consolation that the students will have an opportunity of gaining a new and saner outlook. There are few students in Germany to-day from whom we can hope for a positive contribution to the peace of Europe; but, goodness knows, there are still fewer professors. CHRISTOPHER COBB

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BURMA

SIR,—Your leading article on Burma seems to assume, as do the majority of those few Members of Parliament who interest themselves in the problem, that the leaders of A.F.P.F.L. have a choice in the selection of Dominion Status or independence outside the Commonwealth as the future of their country.

It is impossible to say at the present stage what bearing the recent appalling and tragic events will have upon the matter, but at first glance it seems that it does not and should not affect the fact that A.F.P.F.L. has always quite clearly and without equivocation been dedicated to the proposition of independence outside the Commonwealth. There has been no choice. In the context of Burmese history, in the absence of the communal strife of India, there could be no choice. For any A.F.P.F.L. leader to accept the principle of Dominion Status would be as gross a betrayal of his people as if a Labour Party Minister here were to advocate the union of this country with the United States of America. In either country, the man who advocated the course would not last five minutes—and rightly.

There is, however, a way out and that is in the development of a Britannic Alliance which could include—without allegiance to the British Crown—countries inhabited by non-English-speaking peoples—Burma, later on perhaps a United India, possibly Egypt and a number of European countries. It is interesting to note that this idea has been mooted in Burma by the influential *Burmese Review*, which is widely believed to reflect the views of U Tin Tut, the brilliant Burmese High-Commissioner designate in London.

"Any man's death decreaseth me," said John Donne. All men are decreased by the loss of such a spirit as the late U Aung San. HUGH JENKINS

12 The Woodlands,
Beulah Hill, S.E.19.

A.I.D.

SIR,—Frances Howell's letter on A.I.D. shows with startling clarity the impasse to which our moral philosophy has been brought by the final divorce between sexual intercourse and reproduction. The first two paragraphs show the injustice of discriminating between the spinster and the childless wife in relieving frustration; the third paragraph then deduces, not that the fulfilment and happiness of motherhood should also be offered to the spinster, but that it should be withheld from the wife—a conclusion that may be right but which is bewildering and illogical.

In the attempt to be both moral and consistent the argument seems to have been betrayed into several logical fallacies: it is neither axiomatic nor self-evident that motherhood in a spinster is immoral (nor, necessarily, the worse of two evils); the wartime form of the doctrine of the equality of sacrifice is perverted and pernicious in its teaching that if some *must* drown, *none* shall be saved; it is with increasing success that poverty, hunger, and ill health have been resisted, and the incompleteness of success is not a logical reason for total surrender (though the application of this analogy was a little disingenious in the first place); the emotional bias which rests a general conclusion upon particular wives or couples who have compelled Miss Howell to find marriage sometimes undesirable invalidates the whole argument.

It is now perfectly obvious that, in the matter of sexual morality, we must decant the old wine into new bottles, as the old bottles have proved so inadequate to their task; we must rediscover first principles, and find the ultimate purpose of a sexual code before we start tinkering with the code. At the moment a marriage (so the law says) is not consummated by a thousand sexual acts if conception is deliberately prevented by one spouse without the consent of the other; and now we learn that fornication—or an equivalent—is possible without sexual intercourse. How can philosophers, priests, and physicians expect intelligent adolescents to swallow all this? TREVENEN PETERS

54 Brunswick Gardens, London, W.8.

FILMS AND QUOTAS

SIR,—The proposals of the British Film Producers' Association for revision of the Cinematograph Films Act, as described in Mr. Norman MacKenzie's recent article, strike me as likely to prove disastrous both for the independent exhibitor and the independent producer. The three major cinema circuits of the country, totalling some eleven hundred cinemas, are associated with the production companies of Mr. Rank and the Associated British Picture Corporation; furthermore, the films produced by Sir Alexander Korda's companies also go to the major circuits. Naturally these big circuit cinemas have first claim on the films produced by their associated companies. Consequently, wherever an independent exhibitor finds himself in competition with the big circuits for these films he will be unable to get them. Meanwhile, the independent producer will hesitate to make films if he has no hope of getting them into the cinemas controlled by the three major circuits.

Short of severing the link between the big studios and the big circuits, the remedy, surely, is to retain the existing quota on renters (in addition to a quota on exhibitors). Renters will be very ready to accept films from any independent concern which shows it can make them as efficiently as Mr. Rank or Alexander Korda. And, as experience shows, the renter will assist such independent concerns with finance and, in some cases, trained personnel from Hollywood. With the certainty of an outlet for his film the independent producer can afford to undertake the risks of production. This in turn ensures the independent exhibitor a supply of British films. G. R. R. TAYLOR

8 Cambrian Road, Richmond, Surrey.

RESIGNATION OF CIVIL SERVANTS

SIR,—In his recent letter Mr. W. J. Brown erroneously states, "Established civil servants are free to leave the service of the Government at any time they choose." In fact, it is an incident of the status which they have voluntarily sought and which has been conferred on them, that they cannot divest themselves of it—they can only express their wish to do so by tendering their resignation. In practice, of course, this tender is always accepted except: (a) when grounds for dismissal exist and it is thought desirable to dismiss; or (b) the servant is sufficiently valuable to be asked to reconsider the matter. I believe I am right in saying that exception (b) has never occurred: those who resign in a huff or as a manoeuvre get taken at their word, however eminent they may be in rank; those who really are valuable have the decency to scout round first, and see if they can tender their resignation without being troublesome by doing so. (The reply to a civil servant who simply writes: "I resign"—and it has been so written—is: "I am, etc., to accept the resignation which you tender.") PERMANENT CIVIL SERVANT

COUNTING BIRDS

SIR,—As the organiser of the Black Redstart Inquiry of the British Trust for Ornithology, I should like to point out that the account of the spread of this bird in England given by Mr. Moorhouse in your last issue is somewhat misleading. The fact that they bred annually at Wembley from 1926 to 1941 was indeed a startling discovery, but it did not become generally known till 1944. The really interesting development was the appearance of Black Redstarts in Inner London in the breeding season from 1936 onwards. Nesting has been proved in London in every year since 1940, and elsewhere in south-east England annually since 1937, at first at Cambridge, but later in coastal towns such as Lowestoft, Dover, Hastings and Southampton. Returns for this year are not yet complete, but at least five pairs are known to have bred in London. I should welcome records, for 1947 and previous years, from readers who may have seen Black Redstarts in this country in the breeding season.

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

WHY, at the turn of the century, did Marie Corelli achieve a popularity seldom gained by any novelist before or since? Not only did she make a fortune by her sales, but she drew her readers from all classes of the population, rich and poor, intelligent and otherwise. If Ella Wheeler Wilcox literally knelt at her feet, Meredith also was deeply moved; Tennyson encouraged her; Mr. Gladstone visited her in order to express his admiration and discuss her power to sway the masses; Mr. Asquith demanded an autographed copy of one of her books. She was on friendly terms with Royalty in this and other countries, and was said to be the only writer whom Edward VII invited to be present at his coronation. Strangers wrote to her from all over the world, Indian princes, officers, nurses, miners; in my schooldays we had an appeal from the Mission to Seamen for her novels as the favourite books of sailors at sea. They were translated into most European and some Asiatic languages; at home they supplied texts for Father Vaughan and Mr. Spurgeon, and extracts were read aloud from the pulpit at Westminster Abbey. She was invited to lecture to gatherings such as the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh. She met many famous people, Burne-Jones and Labouchere, who became her friends, Rider Haggard, Mark Twain, Robert Browning ("a charming old gentleman, so cheery and kind"), Oscar Wilde. She was a vain and angry woman, feverishly imaginative, sincere, undisciplined, thwarted in spite of all her success. What was the way of escape which she offered to her contemporaries, and which they were so eager to tread?

Her stories are melodramatic romances, fairy-tales having little connection with the world. Films, even at their worst, keep some link with reality through a background of street scenes and the like; Marie Corelli's characters move in a realm created by fantasy rather than observation. Her heroines have eyes which flash with mingled tenderness and scorn, and hearts which flutter wildly like snared birds. Their delicate hands, white as rose-petals, sparkle with diamond rings adorning the taper fingers; when they are happy they utter blithe peals of musical laughter like the ripple of a lark's song, and when they grieve their tears are a sparkling dew. A husband refers to an unfaithful wife as a fallen rose of womanhood, but usually they prefer death to dishonour. Fortunately, the hero can always be relied upon to behave with the gallant grace of a soldier and a gentleman, unless he happens to be some unscrupulous baronet, a notable figure in swagger society. In *Boy* an old maid (aged forty-five) thinks "Such sweet and holy thoughts! . . . a mind which was as white and pure as the Taj-Mahal." Indeed, one feels that, as with a well-known brand of soap-flakes, one never knew before how white the souls of women could be. Considering the effect which these ladies have upon a man "it is more to his honour than his shame if his senses swoon at the ravishing vision, and he, despite his rough masculinity and brute strength, becomes nothing but the merest slave to passion." When one adds that the pages are richly strewn with exclamation marks, inverted commas and capital letters, the resemblance to the novelette is obvious enough; the difference is more difficult to analyse.

There is, to begin with, an immense preoccupation with religion and morality, and whole chapters are frequently no more than tracts or sermons. The novels are padded with lengthy dissertations on immortality, transmigration of souls, the need for religious education, the nature of the First Cause—emphatically not the Mighty Atom. (But since her day it has been split and so is mightier yet.) The Christ-Child is rejected in Rome, the Devil is a handsome and popular figure in English society; at the end of *The Sorrows of Satan* he disappears, arm-in-arm with a Cabinet Minister, within "the House of England's Imperial Government." Secondly, she dabbled in science, then rapidly unfolding its mysterious potentialities. She was fascinated by electric power, by radio-active vibrations, by all the current scientific jargon, and occasionally, among her most fantastic speculations, she had a queer kind of Wellsian intuition: "The wildest fairy-tales might come true, and earth be transformed into a paradise! And as for motive power, in a thimbleful of concentrated fuel we might take the largest ships across the widest ocean." (*The Life Everlasting.*) Thirdly, she had violent prejudices which must have aroused sympathetic echoes in some readers and amusement in others. Society was a mob of sycophants, liars and hypocrites; Paris, a witches' cauldron: "Her men are dissolute—her women shameless—her youth of both sexes depraved—her laws are corrupt—her arts decadent—her religion dead." Prurient modern novels were denounced:

> To judge from the commendation which is bestowed upon these sort of books by the press, it is very evident that the wave of opinion is setting in the direction of letting girls know all about marriage before they enter upon it, in order that they may do so with their eyes open—*very* wide open!

She detested machines and newspapers; hated actors; above all, she abused reviewers. She carried on a perpetual feud with literary critics, gibing at their ignorance in her novels, pointing out how often genius had been misjudged in the past, and how Dante's enemies were in the end immortalised by him in Hell.

She was easy prey, being incapable of hiding her emotions. It is interesting to note, for instance, that the theme of illegitimacy, of the unwanted child who finally makes good, recurs often:

> There's many a piece of wicked injustice in the world, but nothing more wicked than to set shame or blame on a child that's born without permit of law, or blessing of priest. For it's not the child's fault—it's brought into the world without its own consent—and yet the world fastens a slur upon it!

This is said about Innocent, the heroine of the book of that name. Marie Corelli herself, born in 1855, was the daughter of Charles Mackay, a brilliant if erratic journalist, who married her mother two years after the death of his first wife, in 1861. She was an uneducated woman, and it is supposed that the child spent her first years among her mother's very poor relations; although in later life she allowed romantic legends to be spread about her origin (that her mother was an Italian Countess, and so on), it is clear that her early dreary memories and the unjust stigma of her birth made a deep wound, and that she was unable to hide the scar. Her heroines are frequently women of outstanding genius, who force their male rivals reluctantly to acknowledge their gifts. There is, for instance, Mavis Clare in *The Sorrows of Satan*, a writer like Marie Corelli, and by a curious coincidence with the same initials; as well as being pretty and well-dressed, she had "clearness of thought, brilliancy of style, beauty of diction . . . united to consummate ease of expression and artistic skill. . . The potent, resistless, unpurchaseable quality of genius." One cannot wonder that when her name was uttered, "a sort of hush fell on our party as though an 'Angelus' had rung." After all, why should not women write? "Would you have them all the slaves of man's lust or convenience?" Marie Corelli was always very bitter about the alleged inferiority of her sex, and chose a woman surgeon rather than a man to perform a serious operation upon herself, yet for all that she would have nothing to do with feminism. On one occasion, replying to the toast of the ladies by the American Ambassador, she claimed her right as a woman to tie love-knots between nations although she was no suffragette. She attacked Ibsen for his advanced views on the subject, and idealised the humble and submissive wife. It is here—in this contradiction, this making the best of both worlds—that we may find the answer to the riddle of her immense popularity; this was something which found a deeper echo in the minds of her readers than her religious philosophising, her pseudo-science or her explosive fits of rage. As with feminism, so with all else: she managed to let her readers both have their cake and eat it.

There was, for instance, the matter of the social conscience, uneasily awakening, like the Sleeping Beauty, behind a sheltering hedge of many centuries. Writers were still able to ignore it if they pleased; if they would not, or could not, the alternative seemed to be a fierce Dickensian championship of the poor. Marie Corelli was not even aware of the dilemma, quite content to take now one side, and then the other, according to the mood of the moment. In *Temporal Power* the revolutionary cries out to the king:

> "Have you ever seen young children crying for bread? I have! Have you ever seen strong men reduced to the shame of stealing bread, to feed their wives and infants? I have! I think of it as I stand here, surrounded by the luxury which is your daily lot—knowing what I know, I would strip those satin-draped walls, and sell everything of value around me if I possessed it, rather than know that one woman or child starved within the city's precincts!"

She might deplore the poverty of the masses, or assert that all the greatest men came from the toilers, but that did not prevent her from referring to "the unwashed, beer-drinking, gin-swilling classes who clamour for shortened hours of labour, and want work to be expressly invented for their benefit." Inconsistency never troubled her. She, whose friends included Beerbohm Tree, George Robey and especially Ellen Terry, invariably wrote of actors as mountebanks and unprincipled rogues. She could outdo Kipling in patriotic sentiment, yet could be as sensitive as her contemporary Olive Schreiner to a new kind of Pacifist feeling.

> War—especially nowadays—is a mere slaughter-house—and the soldiers are the poor sheep led to the shambles. The real nature of the thing is covered up under flags and the shout of patriotism, but, as a stern fact, it is a horrible piece of cowardice for one nation to try murdering another just to see which one gets its way first. (*Boy.*)

So, too, with religion. She made violent attacks upon its institutions, especially upon Roman Catholicism ("the theatrical juggler of Rome"), yet upheld a nebulous Christianity all mixed up with semi-theosophical ideas, and only her villains expressed atheism. She once wrote to the vicar of Stratford-on-Avon that she herself belonged to a fraternity which did not accept any of the Church forms. In her novels one was able to wallow in a pool of mystic emotion and, as it were simultaneously, to sprawl on the dry sands of rationalist criticism. This ambivalent attitude towards religious and social questions must have been comforting to a generation uneasily conscious that the deep-rooted prejudices of the nineteenth century were being exposed to the cold winds of the twentieth.

Marie Corelli's aggressiveness led to frequent quarrels in Stratford, where she spent the later part of her life. The townspeople disliked her and were frequently unjust, for, in her own way, with a genuine love for Shakespeare and for the past, she did them some service. She saved from destruction the old cottages which were supposed to have belonged to the poet's grand-daughter, and she secured Harvard House, the home of John Harvard's mother and made it a link between England and America. Her own house, Mason Croft, she left to the nation for the benefit of distinguished visitors to the town. The clause "absolutely excluding actors and actresses and all persons connected with the stage" has been declared void, so that today, under the British Council, it has become the accepted meeting-place between foreign guests and members of the cast of the Memorial Theatre. In her personal relations she was most kind. Her servants loved her; she was a good friend, and a helpful and devoted daughter — adopted daughter, as she called herself—to Charles Mackay. She died in 1924 when her fame had long declined. Her symbolism of doves and flowers—violets, roses, even orchids in florists' windows—had faded years before; yet perhaps it gave more pleasure and did less harm than no orchids for anyone at all.

D. L. HOBMAN

MORE THACKERAY LETTERS

The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray. Edited by GORDON R. RAY. Vols. III and IV. *Oxford University Press.* £6 6s. (for the four volumes).

These volumes take Thackeray from 1852, when he began *The Newcomes* and made his first American lecture-tour, to 1863, the year of his death. Mr. Gordon Ray is now preparing a supplementary volume of the letters that remain in England and which, regrettably though through no fault of his, he could not print in their proper chronological place. The edition is a monument of patient scholarship, and in the volumes under review I have found nothing to complain of more serious than an obstinate misspelling—imitated from Thackeray—of the name "Lyttelton." The index is exemplary, the illustrations from Thackeray's pen enchanting.

The more one learns about Thackeray, the better one thinks of him. Success only improved his character. (Among other things it modified the occasionally immoderate zest he felt in his earlier days for the company of what he calls "bigwigs.") Some may think that his action in the Garrick Club squabble was excessive. (His conversation there had been most maliciously traduced in a gossip-column by a young fellow-member, whom he succeeded in having expelled.) For my part I think that he was justified, and that it was Dickens who came out badly from the incident. Indeed the only unpleasant trait I can detect in these letters is the smugness with which during his lecture-tours he writes to his daughters about the fatigue and boredom he is enduring, and all—how he rubs it in!—in order to secure for them a livelihood after his death. Such paternal self-praise seems, however, to have been common Victorian form.

Indefatigable was his patience with his tiresome, jealous, exacting, Evangelical mother—"O so tender so loving so cruel . . . there's hardly a subject on which we don't differ." To his servants he was kindness itself; and nothing is more characteristic than the trouble he took to help a governess who, having become a Catholic, believed mistakenly that it was her duty to proselytise any pupils she could obtain. And what other writer of his stature has been so modest? Rereading *Pendennis*, he complains that it is "dreadfully stupid"; *Esmond* is dismissed as "a dismal imitation of the old style"; of *The Newcomes* he writes:—

> I can't but see it is a repetition of past performances, and think that vein is pretty nigh worked out in me. Never mind: this is not written for glory but for quite as good an object namely money; wh. will profit the children more than reputation, when there's an end of me, and money and reputation are alike pretty indifferent . . . One of Dickens's immense superiorities over me is the great fecundity of his imagination.

This modesty he carried indeed to a point that shocks modern notions of the novelist's duty to his art, as when he asked Percival Leigh (a dim *Punch* contributor) to fill up, if necessary, three pages in the serial publication of *The Newcomes* with material of his own "noble invention." One may notice sadly that, since the time of Thackeray and Dickens, novelists as they have become more conscientious have also grown less inventive. Thackeray himself seems to foreshadow this decline when he confesses, as he works on *The Virginians*: "I hate story-making incidents, surprises, love-making, &c., more and more every day."

The letters are rich in glimpses of current life: Princesse Mathilde "covered with diamonds, superb and sulky"; Sir Henry Taylor "smiling sadly under jokes"; and Charlotte Brontë, "the fiery little eager brave tremulous homely-faced creature." Again "There's a fire and fury raging in that little woman a rage scorching her heart wh. doesn't suit me." *Villette* he thought "rather vulgar":—

> It is an excellently written book—but a very disagreeable one. She turns everyone "The seamy side out"—So plain a person as Miss Bronte must see all things darkly—but the book is like a fine dutch picture the painting is as minute and delicate.

Similarly he could not sit through *La Dame aux Camélias*—it was "too wicked"; and of *Madame Bovary* he said: "It is a heartless, coldblooded study of the downfall and degradation of a woman." However alien to our taste such remarks may be, none of them can justly be called stupid. Nor should the probability that Thackeray was the victim of a venereal infection make us consider him a hypocrite. He complained to the public that their prudery would no longer allow him the freedom enjoyed by Fielding; and when as editor of *The Cornhill* he felt obliged to refuse work by Mrs. Browning and Trollope, he was careful to blame not their choice of theme but the squeamishness of his readers.

His enforced celibacy weighed on him very heavily:—

> I have a famous little horse to ride and get on him once a fortnight. I have good daughters, good wine in the cellar, easy money in my pocket, a fair reputation—I ought to be happy oughtn't I? Eh bien! I don't think I am above 4 days in the month. A man without a woman is a lonely wretch.

And here is part of a letter commenting upon his unlucky love for Mrs. Brookfield:—

> I don't see how any woman should not love a man who loved her as I did J.; I don't see how any man should not love a woman so beautiful, so unhappy, so tender; I don't see how any husband, however he might have treated her, should be indifferent at the idea of losing it. But that I knew I was safe (I mean that any wrong was out of the question on our children's account) I suppose I should have broken away myself. I'm sure that one or the other on their side were wrong in not dismissing me. But a part of poor Brookfield's pride of possession was that we should envy him and admire her, and of all the weakness, goodness, love, generosity, vanity, playing with edged tools, we are now paying the penalty . . . I wish that I had never loved her . . . The thought that I have been made a fool of is the bitterest of all perhaps.

Tedious as one may find large tracts of Thackeray—a third of *Vanity Fair* were better unread and the marvellous *Newcomes* is disfigured by countless sermons—he writes always with a seemingly careless grace that excites envy and admiration. Let me end with three examples from these letters. The first shows his power of turning platitudes to favour and to prettiness:—

> We don't get amusinger as we get older, we grow prosy and repeat ourselves and talk about our complaints and selfish grievances: but our old friends bear up with our dullness for old times' sake; and we go and get our sober cups of tea with them, and potter and prattle, &, dull as we are, they like us—and we don't care for making any new friends, and for young amusements or companions or conversations. We remember that we are nearly five and forty years old. We care for no woman under thirty, except our daughters, & we like the sober grey-headed twilighty kind of life pretty well.

Now, his gift for nonsense, in a letter to a parson's wife:—

> I will try and not be proud to you. I will be affable. Rosa may see the girls at proper intervals. I have no objection to their meeting occasionally the daughters of the clergy. I intend to run away with a Bishop's wife myself and have my children confirmed by him as I know he doesn't believe in his religion.

And here is his wit (he had been invited to subscribe to the embellishment of a grave):—

> I lent Maginn £500 in his life time and he paid me £20 back. I think I have done enough in giving him bread let other philanthropists give him a stone.

O eloquent, just and gentle Titmarsh, your goodness is as light-hearted as your gaiety, and few are the authors with whom I should so love to forgather in the Elysian Fields.

RAYMOND MORTIMER

MR. MAUGHAM

Creatures of Circumstance. By W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM. *Heinemann.* 10s. 6d.

Like the water colour painters, the writers of short stories are bound to repeat themselves; but to the lover of brief acquaintances this is a perennial attraction of the art: a little a lot of times rather than a lot at once. To hear again the prosing voice and so soon; to wonder what it is up to now, to discover that it is up to its well-known tricks, that is half the attraction of the stories of Chehov, Maupassant, Kipling, Wells, James and Maugham. Our pleasure in short stories is not confined to style, to subject or purpose as it generally is in the novel; the element of sheer performance, the excitement of virtuosity, are indispensable as well. The ingrained short-story writer may choose a poor subject, as a singer may choose a poor song; but he is unlikely to sing it badly unless he has lost his voice altogether.

The voice of Mr. Somerset Maugham, in his latest collection of short stories, is as flexible as ever. Can there be any doubt that he is the most readable and accomplished English short-story writer of the serious kind alive? Who else has his range of curiosity? Who else tells a story as well? Who else has a comparable boldness and mastery of technical gift? The last has been thought faint praise, as if we were praising him for a mere monkey-cunning; but this is largely because, in his own generation, Mr. Maugham stood apart, just as, inevitably, he does in ours. He lacks poetry; one can see that he has not the original imagination of Wells, that unlike Chehov or Maupassant, he has no roots and little taste for familiar landscape. Mr. Maugham is half hermit, half man of the world, and the hesitations of that dilemma have turned him into a man of curiosity rather than a man of imagination; a moralist, uttering the short acerbities and directing the indiscreet enquiries of the humane mind. He has perfected the manner and means of the raconteur; and this more than anything else has separated him from his successors. For the raconteur, like the traveller or collector, puts himself at one remove from character and circumstance in order to portray his own presence in them; ourselves, after two wars and pressed against the face of life as we are, have not this security. We are now grossly aware of the creative; the circumstance takes second place. If Mr. Maugham thinks contemporary short stories deficient in plot—and they are—we cannot reject the suspicion, where he shows us, for example, a comfortable, happily married, middle-aged woman and reveals that years before she was the centre of an appalling Elizabethan drama of incest and murder, that any characters would do for the tale. Its interest lies in his acute comments on the fact, his amused intuition that the rational in human nature is the fantastic; in the speculative tone of his voice and not in the portrayal of a character. Character is a lesser interest, whether it is the cast or the chemistry of the mind and heart. The omniscient or directly told stories where Maugham's own comments are lacking, are successful, for he is adept in all kinds, even in the plotless *Sanatorium* which is the best of this collection; but, most of them they are less impressive.

It is often said that Maugham has an obsession with the sexual subject; but a moment's thought will show that his real subject is stoicism. How much can a human being endure? What is it that will break the conventional Colonel whose wife has so suddenly become a celebrated poetess and has exposed her inner life to the world? A girl's lover is imprisoned; will his crime break her passion? No, the prisoner will cease to love because the intensity of his imagination will exhaust his passion. There are jealousies that end in murder and others that end in the comedies of readjusted pride. A man is willing to live for a hopeless and tragic love but will die when he sees that his sacrifice has been for an unworthy object. Mr. Maugham certainly has

Henry James's trick of turning situations inside out. Where his plots differ from Henry James's is in the fact that they are not turned right side in again so that they can become the growing point of a new story. The plots of Mr. Maugham are dicta within which the human case is set. But his real search is for the breaking point. It is the natural theme for a ghost story and in *A Man from Glasgow* he does in fact pursue it in a tale that takes a skin off the mind.

One "direct" story in this book, *Flotsam and Jetsam*, must be excepted from the general criticism. Its technical virtuosity is astonishing, and points to Maugham's special contribution: his narrative. *Flotsam and Jetsam* has a flaw but is worth analysing because it is the kind of tale so often attempted unsuccessfully. A very simple kind: the story that trails back into a lifetime has been the downfall of many writers, mainly because they have not added the right obstructions. Mr. Maugham might have written this tale in the first person; or he might have introduced us at once to Skelton, his observer. Instead he opens with the chief character and his wife; then startles us by using the third character as observer. He does this in order to gain time, to establish his situation and to deceive us about Skelton's role so that we are ripe for surprise. With a daring which only the expert could justify, he leaves the whole secret to be revealed at the end through the mind of the chief character's wife. How, when this poor woman is left alone, can she be prompted to think back to the crime that has imprisoned her husband and herself in fear and hatred of each other?

"But Mrs. Grange watched the two prahus till a bend of the river took them out of sight. She walked slowly up to the house and went into her bedroom. The light was dim because the blinds were drawn to keep out the heat, but she sat down at her dressing table and stared at herself in the glass. Norman had had the dressing-table made for her soon after they married. It had been made by a native carpenter, of course, and they had had the mirror sent from Singapore, but it was made to her own design, of the exact size and shape she wanted with plenty of room for all her toilet things and her make-up. It was the dressing table she had hankered after for donkey's years and had never had. She remembered still how pleased she was when first she had it. She threw her arms round her husband's neck and kissed him.

"'Oh, Norman, you are good to me,' she said. 'I'm a lucky little girl to have caught a good chap like you, aren't I?' But then everything delighted her."

That dressing table, not the narrator, not the woman herself, has taken the story back twenty years, so that we do not notice the two time-jumps in the narrative. This is a master stroke; but continue with her tale. The secret of Maugham's narrative, the secret that gives it body and saves it from the vice of hearsay, that keeps the illusion floating lightly, irresistibly, mirage-like before our eyes, is in its varying pace and its adroit adjustments of the point of view. First we are in Mrs. Grange's mind as she sits at her dressing table; then we are distracted but pushed on fast by a few comments from the author; next she speaks aloud. Then (she was an actress) she recalls Skelton the observer who has broken her loneliness and imagines a scene of confession with him; a few more lines and the author himself writes in the third person and leads us to where she is speaking again. This last and crucial phase is fixed in our minds by the only striking image in the whole story—the language has been purposely subdued—but here:

> "the sound of her voice, ringing along the wooden floors, piercing the wooden walls, was like the uncanny, inhuman gibber of new wine fermenting in a vat."

The unsuspecting reader may have thought he was listening to Mr. Maugham's voice all the time; but the art of narrative lies in the breaking up of narrative, in chopping and changing without obtruding the fact upon the reader, in varying the voice. These changes of voice are precisely what would occur to an attentive disciple of the best masters of English plain prose, and they are the crown of Mr. Maugham's supremacy in the kind of story he writes.

V. S. PRITCHETT

ANTI-ROOSEVELT

American Foreign Policy in the Making. By CHARLES R. BEARD. *Oxford University Press.* 18*s.*

The Nuremberg trial was preceded in the United States by the Pearl Harbour probe, designed to prove that Mr. Roosevelt started the Pacific war. This led in turn to a violent counter-attack by F.D.R.'s supporters against his more obstinate enemies, who were accused of precipitating war by their isolationist policy. It is this latter thesis—that the second world war could have been prevented if the American people had responded to President Roosevelt's dynamic policies—that Mr. Beard seeks to refute.

This is a silly quarrel, and Mr. Beard's contradiction is a silly and biased book. He is shocked that Americans can be so unpatriotic as to suggest that any fellow countryman should bear some responsibility for the war; he solemnly prates of war guilt being removed from the Nazi party to the American Senate, as if there were no degrees of guilt, and as if anyone in the world can be wholly innocent of a world war. He also makes a wild and impracticable distinction between foreign policy—which is a publicly stated programme—and foreign affairs—which is the working out of that programme. Mr. Beard deals only with the first of these, thus confining himself to Presidential orations, and ignoring all the thousands of less open and more effective methods by which a foreign policy is made known to the public.

Even in this limited sphere the selection is very odd and very purposeful. Mr. Beard's thesis is that Mr. Roosevelt was himself an isolationist and never gave a lead to American interventionists. He therefore greatly underplays Roosevelt's Good Neighbour policy, his strictures on the first Neutrality Act, his attempts to get it altered before war broke out, and his naval preparedness programme. At the same time he gives full play to F.D.R.'s "repudiation" of the League of Nations in the 1932 campaign, and his pledge not to send American boys overseas in the 1940 campaign.

By such judicious selection Mr. Beard spoils his own case, which is a pity, because it is an important case and one that deserves discussion. During his first term of office President Roosevelt undoubtedly considered that the domestic problems of the country were more pressing, and he paid little attention to foreign affairs. In 1935 he could still say "despite what happens in continents overseas, the United States of America shall and must remain, as long ago the father of our country prayed that it might remain—unentangled and free." Yet exactly two years later he warned that if wars raged abroad "let no one imagine that America will escape . . . that this Western hemisphere will not be attacked." Mr. Roosevelt had changed his view, but a poll that year showed that 71 per cent. of the American people still thought the American venture in 1917 had been a mistake.

The problem which confronts an honest historian in assessing Mr. Roosevelt's policies is whether in the years between the "Quarantine"

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speech of 1937 and the outbreak of war the President did all that he could to educate the people and teach them their responsibilities in a new world order.

American politics, with elections so fixed that there is only one session of Congress between campaigns (since elections are biennial and campaigns last eight months) put a premium on caution and on telling the people what they want to be told. It is always just too late to teach a new lesson before the next election. As a result, in times of crisis, policies are decided in terms of national necessity, but justified to the people in terms of outworn myths. Inevitably when the crisis is past the people find that they have been cheated (whether for their own good or not does not matter) and disillusionment sets in.

Mr. Beard's last chapter "Peace Promises in the Election Year 1940" is a devastating analysis of the shifts to which two great men—Roosevelt and Wilkie—resorted so as to cover up the gap between the true world situation and what they dared tell the people. It is a shameful story, and yet, such is the paradox of American politics, during this very campaign, in which every voter was promised blissful tranquillity in a world in flames, it was possible to carry out two great acts of policy—the destroyers for bases deal and the first peacetime introduction of the draft in America. A good historian would attempt to explain this paradox, and show the relation between politics and policies. But Mr. Beard is interested only in using parts of the record to build up a case against Mr. Roosevelt in which, by another paradox, he appears as a cross between a weathercock and a pied piper, who followed public opinion yet managed to mislead the people.

JOHN MORTON

FRENCH MOUNTAINEERING DURING THE OCCUPATION

High Heaven. By JACQUES BOELL. Introduction by FRANÇOIS MAURIAC. *Paul Elek.* 12*s.* 6*d.*

During the Nazi occupation many of the French mountaineers repeated the super-severes of the pre-war period, often in astonishingly short times, and this in spite of wretched rations. *High Heaven* is a record of some difficult new ascents during this same period by a Frenchman who on one occasion was handicapped not only by poor food but the necessity to climb throughout in "rubbers," his nailed boots having disintegrated. As no translator is mentioned on the title page, it is a reasonable assumption that Mr. Boell is responsible for the English, and very good English it is, its occasional Gallicisms and slight deviations from rigid orthodoxy being indeed one of the attractions of a colourful prose. How far Mr. Boell's apologia will carry conviction to non-mountaineers, I cannot say, but his interpretation of the mountain madness will satisfy fellow-victims of that incurable complaint. "After a climb like that it wouldn't matter if you made a complete mess of your life. You could do something thoroughly stupid, like getting married."

Mr. Boell has a genuine gift for recalling not only the excitements of a difficult climb but also the beauty of mountain scenery:

> Just then, almost as if it had been promised, the mist began to break up; great blue rents appeared along the neighbouring ridges. We could see the surface of it close by, quivering and whirling under some compulsion imperceptible to us; the whole mass was thinning and dissipating, and soon there remained of it nothing but a plume of vapour, light as a Chopin melody, twisted about the North Peak. At the far end of Les Etançons, where the last waves of the sea of cloud still rolled, La Meije, all streaming with light, lifted her proud granite cliff towards the sky.

It would be unreasonable to expect a Frenchman writing during the occupation to be fair to German mountaineers, but I am not convinced by his analysis of the influence of national characteristics on mountaineering. Of course there were Germans for whom "the mountains are a means rather than an end . . . a source of national prestige," and the proportion of such mountaineers was no doubt higher in Germany than elsewhere, but this high proportion was due to accidental reasons rather than to enduring elements in the national character. Many young Germans who felt humiliated by the Treaty of Versailles sought in the most desperate of Alpine climbs a solace for wounded national pride. That there is nothing specifically German in such a reaction is clear from Mr. Boell's reactions to the defeat of 1940. "Our beloved mountains seemed to us then our greatest consolation. . . . Let me admit that we also needed to re-discover a little pride in ourselves by doing some deed which was heroic in our own eyes."

On the other hand, it is certainly true that national characteristics influence the literary expression of the mountain cult. Mr. Boell quotes the remark of a companion about a glorious snow-slope: "That excites me just as much as a naked woman." My friend Mr. Tyndale would, I feel, never pass such an analogy in the discreet pages of the *Alpine Journal*—Mr. Boell claims that "the motive power behind all passions springs from the same source." Perhaps, but if he will re-read the *Phaedrus* he will probably agree that it is not until we pass beyond "the love of beautiful bodies" and attain to Platonic love (in the proper sense of the term) than we can begin to equate the love of mountains and the love of man or woman.

ARNOLD LUNN

DISPLACED SOULS

Il Cielo e Rosso. By GIUSEPPE BERTO. *Longanesi*, 1947.

This is a remarkable book—the best book about the war, I think, that has yet appeared in any language—a war-book in which there are no battles, no party-politics and no speeches, no mention of patriotism or nationalism, or of hatred between class or nation. It is a picture of the war as it appears to civilians, the survivors of a little bombed town in Northern Italy. And the men who have brought destruction from the sky, and later on, drive along the roads and sometimes dole out some rations—are known throughout the book, neither as Germans nor British nor Americans, but simply as "the foreigners," or "the soldiers."

The story is a simple one. The little town (perhaps Treviso) is for a long time quite remote from the war, and its inhabitants are totally indifferent to its rights or wrongs. So long as it goes well and is fought a long way off, they say, "it's just and necessary"; as it comes nearer and goes badly, they turn against it and long for peace, any peace. But they still think about it as something that happens to other people. Sometimes there is an air-raid alert, and some of them go down to the shelters; but nothing happens, and when they come out, they say, "Thank God, they've gone somewhere else to-day." And the refugees who come from other cities are not much liked or pitied, because they make them feel uncomfortable.

Then the air-raid comes. The airmen know and care nothing about the people on whom they drop their bombs—people of an old, tired race, speaking the soft dialect of the Veneto. A whole quarter of the town is destroyed, and the bewildered survivors wander about the ruins, looking for their belongings and their dead. A part of the area is cleared, but the rest has been too badly hit. There the fires which have started

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are allowed to burn themselves out; the ruins crumble still further, with corpses still under them—and lime and disinfectants are thrown over the rubble. Then the whole area is fenced off with barbed wire, and the people call the houses that are still standing there, "the houses of the dead."

But it is not only the dead who live there. Gradually, as the fighting comes nearer and then passes on, with a new "foreigner" in possession, some of the people who have taken refuge in the hills creep back under the barbed wire, and live there. But though they have now found dwellings, they are still lost; they have lost themselves. Among them—living in what was once a luxurious brothel—are a party of children: two girls of 13 and 15, Carla and Giulia, who are protected by Carla's lover, a boy of 17 called Tullio, a half-witted little girl, whom they have picked up, and a schoolboy of 15, Daniele, who has run away from school and who, after having been given a lift in an army lorry (there is an admirable scene between him and an American sergeant) is found by Tullio on the outskirts of the ruins. The rest of the book is the story of these children's lives. Tullio is a Communist and the leader of a boys' gang, which lives by theft and blackmail; Carla has become a prostitute; Giulia, who is gentle and "good," cooks for them and looks after the little girl. But the word "good" has ceased to have any but a formal meaning. There are things that are necessary: to eat, to have a bed to sleep in, to do without a fire, so that no one shall see smoke coming from an "empty" house and discover them—in short, to keep alive. But there are also kindness and love.

"Giulia," says Daniele, after the others have taken him in, "I have never known anyone as good as you."

Giulia shook her head in surprise. "We aren't good," she said. "You mustn't think so. We are what we are, neither good nor bad, and we do good and bad things at the same time, as best we can, and as they happen to come along, in so far as they are of use to us. If you stay with us you will see some very ugly things and perhaps you will be ashamed of us—and if so you had better go away now—better for you and better for us."

But Daniele does not go. He joins Tullio's gang—and since he is no good at stealing—"because you are not like us—you think too much"—he is given a little job of blackmail to get medicines for them all; and later on these medicines are needed for Giulia, who develops consumption. Giulia dies and is buried by the others under the rubble, so as not to be discovered—and Carla, who has come to love Daniele, is unable to persuade him to stay with her. As he had run away from school after his mother's death, so he runs away now after Giulia's death. But suddenly, in the night, as he is travelling southwards in a cattle-truck, he realizes that there is nowhere to run to, nothing to find.

> The old man [an old schoolmaster] had made use of such a lot of words, telling about the great day in which good would return again, for the whole of humanity. But Daniele didn't want to wait for that day, he didn't believe in it. And the old man didn't really believe in it either—and anyhow would never live to see it.

So Daniele jumps off, under the train. This end is not wholly convincing, and is, perhaps, the only fault of taste in the book. But its merits, in any case, do not lie in the story—though the characters of the four young people are extraordinarily sharp and alive. What is unforgettable is the general atmosphere—a grey, dusty limbo of despair, the climate of destroyed Europe. It is the same climate which is to be found to-day in the towns of Germany, in camps for "displaced persons" all over Europe; in the Balkans, in Siberia, in Istria—in every country where the weight of what people have seen and endured, and bewilderment at what they have lost, and uncertainty as to what lies before them, has outweighed their capacity for experience and has left them with nothing but a flat, hopeless indifference. "Displaced persons," displaced souls, they have had their life cut at the roots. "Perhaps this period," says Berto—"will last for longer than a man's lifetime—and so all these men who are living and thinking now, will never be happy again in their lives, will never again have enough food or clothes or shelter from the cold, or enough certainty of still being alive the next day." There would appear to be a minimum of security, a minimum of permanent human ties and even of solid concrete possessions (a house or a room or a bed of one's own) without which the human spirit withers. It is not only a matter of cold and hunger; it is a question of "élan vital." These people—and there are still hundreds of thousands of them—are literally "lost souls." "People struggling all the time to find food so as not to die, and falling more and more to pieces because they have nothing to live for, except to find food so as not to die."

The writer of this book, Giuseppe Berto, is an Italian officer who has been for three years a prisoner of war in a camp in Texas. This is his first novel. Anything that he may write in future will most certainly be worth reading.

IRIS ORIGO

English Sonnets. Edited by WALT TAYLOR. *Longmans.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

This anthology is based on a very broad definition of the sonnet: "Most sonnets are written in fourteen lines; and nearly all of them are rhymed." Mr. Taylor has thus achieved something rare but essential in collections of this kind—the element of surprise. Instead of being lulled into torpor by a single metrical pattern, endlessly repeated, the reader is kept pleasantly alert by the unexpectedness of the variations—e.g. a "sonnet" by Herrick in seven rhyming couplets, a "Curtal Sonnet" by Hopkins in ten and a half lines.

The selection has been well made. From the sixteenth to the twentieth century, nearly every sonnet of undisputed excellence has been included: one of the few serious omissions is the penultimate sonnet *From the Portuguese*. The great masters of the form, Spenser, Shakespeare, Sidney, Milton, Wordsworth, and Keats, are liberally represented; yet, especially in the case of Edmund Bolton, this book has found room to perform one vital function of any anthology—that of attracting the general reader to the best work of forgotten poets. Above all, scarcely one sonnet in the whole 364 can be read without some pleasure; if ever poetical value is doubtful, as in Basse's sonnet on Shakespeare, entertainment value justifies inclusion.

A few explanatory foot-notes have been added—informative enough to assist the non-specialist's understanding, unobtrusive enough to escape the specialist's wrath. One could wish that the book were free from factual errors (Benjamin Stillingfleet, the original "Blue-stocking," is given his grandfather's dates); and that misprints were not so fre-

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quent and disastrous (e.g. "Dull would he be of soul who could pass by A sight *more* touching in its majesty"). In spite of these defects, however, *English Sonnets* should prove invaluable for purposes of reference, fruitful for critical study, and highly enjoyable for haphazard reading.

Looking at Painting. By MICHAEL ROTHENSTEIN. *Routledge.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

Mr. Rothenstein analyses twenty contemporary English pictures which are reproduced in colour, and adds some comments from the artists represented. The choice of pictures reveals a taste at once catholic and discriminating; the only fault of the well-written and intelligent analyses is that they are too short; and the book can be warmly recommended to those who are learning to be interested in pictures. The reproductions are in colour, doubtless usefully for the author's purpose, but the results are as usual mostly unfortunate—in the Matthew Smith, quite calumnious. It is curious that Mr. Rothenstein who is so responsive to virtues and vices of composition should have picked, to represent his own often well designed work, a picture that gallops north-west with no regard for equilibrium.

Week-end Competitions

No. 910

Set by Raymond Mortimer

The French have invented a new form of light verse called a "fafisme,"—five lines of from one to five syllables, with the same consonantal sounds and different vowels (e.g. *Why allow A Malay To lie Low In Galilee?* or *Far from effete, Sihosophat Fought On foot Till he met his fate.*) Six guineas are offered for the best verses of this type about gardens, rivers, the sea, or anything cool. Entries by Aug. 12.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 907

Set by V. S. Pritchett

The usual prizes are offered for a poetical portrait in which the sitter is compared with an animal. Length 16 lines.

Report by V. S. Pritchett

What a mood everyone was in! Only the derogatory comparison was made. There were no good animals in the Animal Farm. The horse, the dog, the cat, I expected: the axolotl was a surprise. This merely larval salamander from Mexico apparently has no secrets and resembles a platinum blonde; in open conflict with my encyclopaedia, our competitor apparently esteems it only as an indelicacy. Amusing entries came from Allan M. Laing, Leslie Johnson, Pibwob, Guy Innes, Larry, and Effie Fair. I award a guinea each to T. St. G., Terence Melican, Ethel T. Scheffauer, Haut Brion, Pithecus, and Yorick.

THE THOROUGHBRED

With arching neck and glossy hair
And rolling, startled eye,
Miss Belchamp canters on her mare.
Don't come too close: they'll shy.
Their legs are long; their speech is short;
High-pitched their whinnying laugh.
The Sphere, the Queen, the Tatler sport
At times, their photograph.
Restive, they chafe, accept, admire
The curbs and codes that fret
All those who trace their dam and sire
In the studbook and Debrett.
Sir Lucas Belchamp's shrunk estates
(He broods), can hardly bear
Death duties, and the fees for mates
For Elspeth and the mare. T. St. G.

He crouched in many twilights, till his eyes
Could see the hunted shapes of sound.
These were his victims, and he could devise
Associations more profound
Between the hunter and the hunted than
The dog-like nature knows. His sport
Stayed in the cooling mind till it began
To weld the sensuous with thought.
He knew the elements, he heard the cries
Of archetypal birds. Because
He viewed experience without surprise
And knew his nature as it was,
His music realised the whole
Perfection of his feline soul.
And when he heard the mob's unreal applause
Debussy-turned on them and showed his claws.
TERENCE MELICAN

TO ANNA, A DUMB BLONDE

How silly your hair, so platinum blonde
How silly your ways, so sneakingly fond!
Your light, white lashes, your frail, pale pose
Your flat little secrets that everyone knows
Pink, without wink, your vapid eyes
Mirror a soul that has no surprise.
For anything that you ever say
You might have been dumb from your natal day.
You never smile and you never rave
You haven't a wish this side the grave.
You'd be jealous and mean, but it's too much trouble;
If I were to down you, you wouldn't bubble.
Taking your hair from its morning pins
You flap and flutter your foolish fins.
You ought to be kept in a spirit bottle
You sleek weak creature, you axolotl!
ETHEL TALBOT SCHEFFAUER

THE GRIFFIN

Crined argent, charged purpure,
Fretty with veins azure,
Nine hundred years of race
Mark Sir Leonard Gryphon's face.
Couchant after lunch,
Or rampant on the Bench,
On hustings, when his cheek
Is gules, as his eagle beak,
(His likeness then's not least
To that heraldic beast
With whom he shares his name)
He burns at England's shame.
But even if he could stir
The government sinister,
He could not learn to assuage
His stiff heraldic rage. HAUT BRION

PORTRAIT OF XY

Little eye,
Bloodshot, sly,
Peering from a head awry;
Tilted snout
Snuffling out
Any carrion about;
Slavering jaw,
Hairy claw
Scrabbling filth for reechy maw;
Stinking, thieving,
Offal reaving
Scavenging his betters' leaving;
Craven, shameless, unforgiving,
Scouring graves to make his living.
How does XY differ from hyena?
Not at all—except the latter's cleaner. PITHECUS

SHAKESPEARE-DRAYTON SONNET.
(Sc. sonnet XVIII)

Shall I compare thee to a Crocodile?—
Thou art more cruel and intemperate:
False are thy tears; but falser yet thy smile
When thou didst feign to favour me of late.
Thy heart is harder than her scaly back,
Thy blood than frozen glaciers more cold,
Thou dost all truth and loving-kindness lack,
"She died unloved" of thee it shall be told!
Why do I perjure thus my soul with lies?—
Do but again thy favour on me turn
And let me see the love-light in thine eyes
And I shall with a fiercer passion burn.
Oh! if thou wilt but reach a hand to me
I shall through life thy faithful lover be. YORICK

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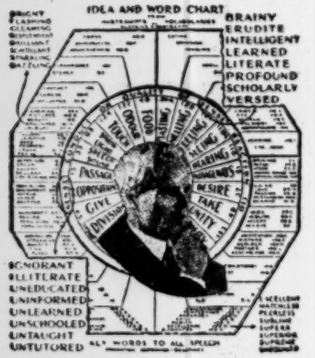

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Company Meeting

BEECHAM GROUP

WORLD-WIDE ACTIVITIES

THE nineteenth ordinary general meeting of Beecham Group, Limited, was held on July 30 in London, Sir J. Stanley Holmes, M.P. (chairman and managing director) presiding.

The following is an extract from his circulated speech:—

The trading profits and sundry revenue for the year ended March 31st, 1947, earned by the companies and branches of the Beecham Group, operating in nearly every part of the world, amounted to £2,682,216, compared with £2,786,705 in the previous year. The set-back was largely accounted for by the loss of profits on home trade directly attributable to the fuel crisis in the early part of the year. The profit on export and overseas trade was £644,745, compared with £543,580.

The home sales of the company's subsidiary companies showed an increase of 8.3 per cent. over those of the previous year. The basis of the business has been continually broadened. The sales of pharmaceutical products, which comprise 32 per cent. of the company's turnover, were more than maintained, while the sales of toilets and foodstuffs showed a gratifying expansion.

The net amount available for dividend on the Deferred shares and for reserve, after paying all charges, including Preference dividends and taxation, was £504,409, as against £386,326 in 1946. The directors have already paid interim dividends of 36 per cent. and recommend a final dividend of 6 per cent. For the first two months of this financial year our results show a substantial increase over those of the corresponding period of last year.

The report was adopted.

Appointments Vacant

UNIVERSITY of Cape Town. Applics. invited for follg. posts on permanent staff: (a) Professorships: (i) Fine Art (and Director of the Michaelis School of Fine Art). (b) Senior Lectureships: (i) Commerce; (ii) Zoology reqd. to conduct classes in comparative physiology and to supervise the work of M.Sc. students; exp. in marine research will be a recomm.). (c) Lectureships: (i) French (special qualifics. to teach history of French civilisation and/or French philology will be a recomm.); (ii) Geography (two); (iii) Physics; (iv) Pure Mathematics (two). (d) Supervisor of Field Work (Social Science): Responsible to the Director of the School of Social Science for the organization and supervision of Field Work in Social Science. Supervisor will be expected to act as link between the University and Social Welfare organizations in the Peninsula, and the maintenance of suitable co-operative relationships will be among duties of holder of the post. It will also be part of the duties of the Supervisor to conduct classes in Social Admin. and Social Work Procedure and to give some assistance in other classes or seminars and in the general administration of the School. Part of the work of the post must be performed during part of the University vacations. Salary scale per annum: Professors £1,000×£50—£1,300 p.a.; Senior Lecturers £800×£40—£1,000 p.a.; Lecturers (and Supervisor of Field Work in Social Science) £556×£25—£800 p.a. plus a temporary cost of living allowance. Applics. must be submitted in triplicate and must give age, qualifics., and exp., and names of two/three refs., to whom the University may refer and must reach the Secy. of the Universities Bureau of the British Empire (8 Park St. W.1) by Sept. 15, 1947; a further copy should be sent direct (by Air Mail) to Registrar, University of Cape Town, Private Bag, Rondebosch, South Africa. A memorandum giving the general conditions of appointment is obtainable from Secretary of the Universities Bureau.

UNIVERSITY of Manchester. Applics. invited for post of Senior Lecturer or Lecturer in Dept. of Philosophy with special qualifics. in Political Philosophy. Duties to commence as early as possible. Salary scale of Senior Lecturer is from £800 to £950 p.a. and that of Lecturer from £500 to £800 p.a. A scheme of children's allowances is in operation. Status and initial salary will be according to qualifics. and exp. Applics. should be sent by August 23, to Registrar, University, Manchester, 13, from whom further particulars may be obtained.

UNIVERSITY College of S. Wales and Monmouthshire. Coleg Prifathtofaol Dheudir Cymru a Mynwy. Applics. invited for post of Asst. Tutor in Social Science, to specialise in training for Child Care. The Assistant Tutor will be responsible for admin. and tuition in a new course for training of Boarding-out Visitors. Candidates must be graduates with appropriate exp. Initial salary £450 p.a. Applics. must reach Louis S. Thomas, Registrar, University College, Cathays Park, Cardiff, by August 26. Copies of three testimonials should accompany the application or be forwarded as soon as possible afterwards.

UNIVERSITY College of S. Wales and Monmouth. The Council of College invites applics. for post of Assistant Lecturer in Greek; initial sal. £450 p.a. 6 copies of applicn. and testimonials (which need not be printed) to be received by Louis S. Thomas, Registrar, Cathays Park, Cardiff, from whom further particulars may be obtained, by Aug. 23.

SUDAN Government Research Division, Dept. of Agriculture and Forests, has a vacancy for a Chemist. Applicants should possess an hons. degree or equivalent qualifics. in Chemistry with either research exp. on soils or first-class analytical ability. Appointment may be either on Provident Fund Contract with security for seven years or up to the age of 38, whichever is the later date, subject to satisfactory completion of a probationary period of two years, or Short Term Contract for initial period of two years. In the former case, the salary scale applicable is £E.560-630-700-770-840-920-1,000-1,170-1,270 biennially. Short Term Contract scale is approx. 6½% more than the above salary. Starting rate according to age, qualifics. and exp. At present there is a cost of living allowance of 45% of the basic salary with a max. of £E.225 p.a. An outfit allowance at rate of £E.60 is payable on appointment, provided starting salary does not exceed £E.700 on Provident Fund Contract or £E.800 on Short Term Contract (£E.1 = £1 0s. 6d.). Free passage on appointment. Strict medical exam. At present no income tax is payable in the Sudan. For further partics. and application forms apply Sudan Agent, Wellington House, Buckingham Gate, S.W.1. Mark envelopes "Soil Chemist." Latest date for applics. Sept. 30, 1947.

B.B.C. invites applics. from men and women, for Assistant, Children's Hour, Welsh Region, based Bangor. Qualifics.: Understanding of children, ability to write and edit scripts, an aptitude in finding new material suitable for children. Some exp. dramatic production and organising ability desirable. Thorough knowledge of Welsh language essential. Max. starting salary £530 p.a., rising to £680 p.a. Detailed applics. to Appointments Officer, Broadcasting House, London, W.1, marked "Bangor," within 7 days. For acknowledgment enclose stamped add. env.

LONDON School of Economics and Political Science. Applics. invited for an Assistant Lecturership in Logic and Scientific Method, full-time (or possibly part-time), from Oct. 1. Sal. £400 p.a., rising to £500, with family allowances and superann. benefits. Applics., which should be accompanied by names of 3 refs., should be forwarded as soon as possible to Secretary, London School of Economics, Houghton St., Aldwych, W.C.2, from whom further partics. can be obtained.

Appointments Vacant—continued

THE Central Council for Health Education. Appointment of Educational Psychologist. (Amended conditions.) Applics. invited from candidates holding a Degree in Psychology or equivalent and with not less than two years' practical exp. A high standard of lecturing ability is essential. Salary according to capabilities and experience. A Staff Pension Fund has been established. For partics. apply to Medical Adviser and Secy., Central Council for Health Education, Tavistock House, Tavistock Sq. London, W.C.1.

MUSIC Adviser. The Northumberland and Tyneside Council of Social Service invites applics. for this post which includes work with Council for the Arts, Music and Drama in Northumberland, promoting and advising groups, and conducting. Comm. salary £350-£425, according to qualifics. Further partics. (stamped add. env.) from the Director, Northumberland and Tyneside Council of Social Service, 17 Ellison Place, Newcastle-on-Tyne, 1.

THE University of Manchester. Ashburne Hall of Residence for Women Students. Applics. invited from graduates for post of Tutor (part-time) of the Mary Worthington Wing. Salary £100 p.a., together with board and residence. Duties to begin on Sept. 29, 1947, or as soon as possible thereafter. Further partics. from the Registrar, the University, Manchester, 13, to whom all applications should be sent not later than Sept. 13.

L.C.C. Social Worker—Woman Assistant to Local Organiser reqd. for work under Mental Deficiency Acts, especially visiting and reporting upon mental defectives living in their own homes. Candidates should be under 40 and have good standard of educ. and exp. of social work and visiting. Diploma/degree in social science with knowledge of typewriting and clerical work desirable. Salary £375, rising to £500 a year. For application form, returnable by August 21, send stamped addressed foolscap env. to Medical Officer of Health (M.D/A.), Public Health Dpt. (Mental Health Services), County Hall, Westminster Bridge, S.E.1. (7296.)

LIVERPOOL Education Ctee. Applics. invited for post of Children's Officer. Will be responsible for the Boarding-out and Welfare Section of Education Dept., which includes the Chief Boarding-out Officer and Visitors, together with the admin. and record staff under a senior clerk. Appointment is new. Candidates must have had exp. in children's welfare work (visiting, after-care, case work, etc.), and must hold a degree or a diploma in Social Science. Salary: Grade VI of National Joint Council Scale A.P.T. Division (£535 increasing to £600 p.a., plus bonus). Further partics. and application form may be obtained from H. S. Magnay, M.A., Director of Education, 14 Sir Thomas Street, Liverpool. Stamped add. foolscap env. should be enclosed with request for application form.

CITY of Edinburgh—Psychiatric Social Workers. Applics. invited for posts of Psychiatric Social Workers for Child Guidance Clinic and for Corporation Mental Hospitals. Candidates should have qualific. approved by Association of Psychiatric Social Workers. Sal. according to N.J.C. scale. Successful candidates will be reqd. to pass medical exam. and to contribute to Corporation's Superannuation Scheme. Applics., together with recent testimonials, should be sent as soon as possible to Medical Officer of Health, Johnston Terrace, Edinburgh.

CITIZENS' Advice Bureaux, Travelling Officer for Wales. The National Council of Social Service invites applics. from persons who have a thorough knowledge of the Social Services, statutory and voluntary, and of the local government system; able to speak in public and with a knowledge of Welsh. Headquarters will be in Cardiff. Salary in range of £275-£350 according to qualifics., plus travelling and subsistence allowances on Council's scale; superann. scheme. Applics. by August 30 to Asst. Secretary, N.C.S.S., 26 Bedford Sq. W.C.1.

YOUTH Club Leader. The Management Committee of the Portrush Youth Centre, Haddon House, Portrush, invite applics. for post of full-time Youth Leader (male or female). Appointment will date from October 1, 1947, and be subject to approval of the Min. of Education for N. Ireland. Salary, £200-£280 p.a., according to qualifics. and exp., with increments for a person with previous Service as a Youth Leader or with H.M. Forces. Living accom. available on Club premises for single person. Special consideration will be given to ex-Service candidates possessing required qualifics. to fill post efficiently or one able to do so within a reasonable time. Travelling exps. will be refunded to selected candidates coming from a distance for interview. Applics., with copies of testimonials, should be forwarded to Hon. Secy., Portrush Youth Centre Management Cttee., at 25 Coleraine Rd. Portrush, N. Ireland, by August 15.

COUNTY Borough of Reading Education Committee—Service of Youth. The Committee invite applics. from women with suitable qualifics. and exp. for post of Leader for new girls' club to be opened shortly. Exp. of junior club work essential. Sal. scale £270-£12-£416-£6-£420 with appropriate placing. Further partics. and forms of applic. from Chief Education Officer, 177 Kings Rd. Reading, by Aug. 9.

SECRETARY-Accountant reqd. for prog. Manufg. Firm employing about 200. Qualified Accountant age 30-40 pref., with knowledge and exp. of office management, costing and business systems. Applicant must have strong personality and be keen, able and energetic and not afraid of hard work. Good prospects. Write, stating full partics. of educ., qualifics., exp., age and sal. reqd. Box 779, Reynells, 44 Chancery Lane, W.C.2.

Appointments Vacant—Continued

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Educ. Ctee. The Village College, Bottisham, Secondary Modern School. (a) Qualified Assistant Mistress reqd. Ability to assist with Music or Rural Science would be a recommendation. (b) Qualified Assistant Mistress to assist with Physical Training for Girls and General Form Subjects. The Village College, Impington, Secondary Modern School. (a) Qualified Assistant Master reqd. to teach Metalwork and Elementary Engineering. (b) Qualified Assistant Master or Mistress reqd. for General Subjects, and Elementary Commercial Subjects with a small group of senior scholars. The Village College, Sawston, Secondary Modern School: Qualified Assistant Mistress whose chief duties would be the responsibility for the girls' physical training. Application forms, which should be returned as soon as possible, may be obtained on receipt of stamped add. foolscap env., from Chief Education Officer, Shire Hall, Cambridge.

BARNS Hostel School, Ancrum, Roxburghshire, Teacher for Arts and Crafts with some Basic Subjects in this Recognised Residential Special School for difficult boys. Excellent scope for initiative and ideas. Standard scale plus full board. Apply Headmaster.

HORSLEY Hall, Eccleshall, Staffs. Reqd., Sept. (1) Young mistress for Maths. and General Science to S.C. (2) Master for Modern Languages (French and Spanish) Both posts resident. Burnham Sal. School is co-ed. progressive school of about 50 boarders.

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